

Jewish Service Learning

What Is and What Could Be

A SUMMARY OF AN ANALYSIS OF THE
JEWISH SERVICE LEARNING LANDSCAPE

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Charles and Lynn Schusterman
Family Foundation

Jim Joseph Foundation

The Nathan Cummings
Foundation

Prepared by BTW *informing change*



Jewish Service Learning: What Is and What Could Be

A Summary of an Analysis of the Jewish Service Learning Landscape

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The Context of Jewish Service Learning

The concept of service—the giving of oneself for purposes greater than oneself—holds an important place in Jewish tradition. Over time, *tikkun olam*, the Hebrew expression meaning “repairing the world,” has come to be embraced and understood as a concept that extends the obligation to give well beyond the Jewish community itself. To give to those in need is a core value in Jewish texts, reflected in Jewish theology, history and tradition; it is a community responsibility and an expression of Jewish identity. Rooted in fundamental **Jewish values**, the cultivation of organized Jewish Service Learning **programs** is a more recent phenomenon, with most offerings coming into being only in the past ten years.

For many reasons, this is a time to consider the potential that Jewish Service Learning holds for engaging young people in social and community issues and nurturing their Jewish understanding and identity. There are ever present challenges to engaging Jewish young adults—from their search for meaningful connections with Jewish peers to finding lives of purpose. There are ever present challenges to Jewish continuity—from the appeal of assimilation to the youthful disdain for the institutions of elders. There are ever present challenges to social and civil progress—from poverty to natural disasters. The world continues to flatten, placing greater pressure on the boundaries that define communities and the bonds that unite them. These developments lead to ageless questions about how to preserve Jewish culture and identity and what is the obligation of Jews to respond in the face of inequity, crisis and despair.

Jewish Service Learning provides young Jews with the opportunity to understand and consider Jewish values and express those values through hands-on service to others, simultaneously transforming themselves and changing the world. This study was undertaken to better understand and maximize the value that Jewish Service Learning offers.

CLARIFYING TERMS

The term “**Jewish Service Learning**” moves in the traditions of secular national service and service-learning. It distinguishes itself by embracing with equal attention the impact of service on community, personal development, content knowledge and Jewish knowledge.

Why Examine Jewish Service Learning?

- ◆ To understand the value Jewish Service Learning holds and the **impact** it can have on one’s sense of personal identity, communal identity and social responsibility.
- ◆ To encourage the **prevalence of high-quality** Jewish Service Learning that maximizes the value for the server and the served.
- ◆ To enable Jewish Service Learning to achieve more community **prominence**.

National and Community Service emphasizes community benefit and the solving of pressing problems (“getting things done”), with a second order priority placed on benefiting the server through an increased sense of personal responsibility and commitment to a civil society. **Service-learning**, an explicit teaching and learning strategy, emphasizes the priority of content and knowledge acquisition. It is often school-based and combines content-based instruction with service and structured reflection. The service is intentionally selected to associate with instructional outcomes.

Jewish Service Learning¹ combines direct service that responds to real community needs with structured learning and time for reflection, all of which are placed in a rich context of Jewish education and values.

The educational component is particularly important in *immersive* Jewish Service Learning. These programs take young Jews out of their daily lives and engage their hearts and minds in intensive hands-on work, where collective effort and cooperation are paramount to the successful completion of the assignments. In addition to meeting pressing needs, the participants themselves are often deeply influenced by the challenge of the work and their growing understanding of underlying social issues. Jewish Service Learning emphasizes both the bonding social capital created between and among the young people in service and the bridging social capital that is created between the team in service and the community served.²

FOCUS ON YOUNG ADULTS

People of all ages can engage in Jewish Service Learning, with approaches as varied as the individuals themselves. At the same time, Jewish Service Learning holds particular potential for young people when they are in a critical transition from late adolescence to early adulthood. This stage of life is marked by change and exploration; parental influences weaken while peer influences grow. Young adults, often on their own for the first time, are free to make their own decisions, and in so doing, they explore their own identities and life possibilities. They examine how and where they fit into the world and

“The notion of tikkun olam and obligation as Jews to engage in gemulit chasadim already existed before we gave it the name of service. What we are really doing is making our tradition and demands...real for this generation.”

—Jewish Service Learning Practitioner

¹ The term "Jewish Service" is frequently used to describe the practice. In this report, however, we are deliberately using the term "Jewish Service Learning" to reflect the importance of the "learning" and educational aspect of the effort.

² This concept of “social capital” is based on the definition put forward by Francis Fukuyama of George Mason University, Institute of Public Policy (1999). Social capital is comprised of the intangible resources—the norms—that are created between and among people that enable cooperation and efficient human transactions. Social capital is a critical element of “community” because it is a foundation on which effective communication is accomplished, values are nurtured and reinforced and problems are identified and addressed. Sometimes people conflate the manifestation of social capital (networks and civil society) with the social capital itself.

begin to make choices that set the foundation for the remainder of their lives (Arnett, 2000). For those enrolled in higher education, the structured breaks of the school calendar provide particularly ripe opportunities to enlist college student participation in immersive Jewish Service Learning programs. It is for these reasons that this study focuses on the young adult (18-24 year old) cohort.

THIS STUDY

In the fall of 2007, the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, the Jim Joseph Foundation and the Nathan Cummings Foundation commissioned BTW *informing change* (BTW) to assess the landscape of Jewish Service Learning. Joined by a shared interest to better understand the practice and potential of Jewish Service Learning, these foundations asked BTW to examine Jewish Service Learning, the current capacity among practitioners, the support required to further that capacity and the relevance of secular national service and other faith-based service traditions in defining the potential and evolution of Jewish Service Learning.

The funding partners each approached this effort with a perspective informed by the mission, values and culture of their particular foundation. The Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation came to this work with an interest in scaling quality opportunities to engage Jewish young adults in meaningful service experiences; the Jim Joseph Foundation came to this work with an interest in understanding how Jewish Service Learning functions as a learning strategy for advancing Jewish knowledge and identity of young Jews; and the Nathan Cummings Foundation came to this work focused on building capacity in the field to ensure quality alongside growth.

BTW conducted a scan of the Jewish Service Learning landscape in the United States, collecting and analyzing both primary and secondary data. The BTW team conducted 86 key informant interviews with donors, institutional funders, Jewish Service Learning practitioners, community professionals and Jewish thought leaders, as well as representatives of faith-based and secular service organizations. BTW also reviewed demographic, program and impact data from over 50 unique sources.

In addition to a scan of the entire landscape, BTW conducted a deeper program assessment of immersive term-of-service programs that engage young adults in the United States. This assessment identified and focused on 25 Jewish Service Learning programs operated by 15 organizations (see Exhibit 1). BTW administered an online survey to these Jewish Service Learning practitioners to complement key informant interviews and a review of organizational and program documents. All data presented in this report are from this group of practitioners unless otherwise noted.

Exhibit 1

**Immersive, University-Age Jewish Service Learning Programs
Included in this Study, 2007-08³**

Short-Term (1-3 weeks)	Medium-Term (1-3 months)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) Short-Term Service Programs ◆ American Jewish World Service (AJWS) Alternative Breaks ◆ Hillel Katrina Alternative Breaks ◆ Jewish Funds for Justice Alternative Breaks ◆ Jewish National Fund Alternative Spring Break in Israel ◆ Livnot U'Lehibanot Galilee Fellowships program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ AJWS Volunteer Summer ◆ American Jewish Committee's Goldman Fellowship ◆ Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center - Adamah: the Jewish Environmental Fellowship ◆ Livnot U'Lehibanot MASA Journey ◆ URJ Religious Action Center Machon Kaplan ◆ Yeshiva University Center for the Jewish Future Zusman Counterpoint Israel Program 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Local Hillel Alternative Breaks (Domestic and International) ◆ Tzedek Hillel Israel Trips ◆ Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) Keshet Alternative Breaks Argentina Ambassadors ◆ URJ Keshet Alternative Spring Break in New Orleans ◆ Yeshiva University Center for the Jewish Future Alternative Winter Break with AJWS ◆ Yeshiva University Center for the Jewish Future Jewish Life Coast to Coast ◆ Yeshiva University Center for the Jewish Future Student Service Corps - Winter Break in Israel 	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="954 934 1446 976" style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white;">Long-Term (10 months-1 year)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="954 976 1446 1635"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ AJWS World Partners Fellowship ◆ AVODAH: The Jewish Service Corps ◆ Bina's Tikun Olam in Tel Aviv ◆ JDC Jewish Service Corps and Service Corps Fellows ◆ Jewish Organizing Initiative Fellowship Program ◆ OTZMA </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Long-Term (10 months-1 year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ AJWS World Partners Fellowship ◆ AVODAH: The Jewish Service Corps ◆ Bina's Tikun Olam in Tel Aviv ◆ JDC Jewish Service Corps and Service Corps Fellows ◆ Jewish Organizing Initiative Fellowship Program ◆ OTZMA
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³ The portfolio of programs examined was generated by BTW in collaboration with the funding partners. This portfolio is not meant to be exhaustive; it includes programs with a national presence that meet the following criteria: immersive term-of-service programs engaging university-age (18-24 year old) young adults in the United States. BTW collected information on three teen-focused organizations (American Jewish Society for Service, Nesiya and PANIM) and IsraCorps (an Israeli-based volunteer program that is developing a U.S. program); data on these programs are not included in the university-age program data.

As is always true in data collection, there are limitations. Much of the information is self-reported and, therefore, represents the perspectives of individuals interviewed. In addition, the research was not designed to be exhaustive, even among the sub-set of immersive, university-age Jewish Service Learning programs. It is intended to provide a high altitude overview of the Jewish Service Learning landscape.

This document... summarizes the Landscape Research⁴ and presents an action plan based on that research. The action plan foresees a future in which Jewish Service Learning is a cultural norm supported and inspired by high-quality programs that provide meaningful and impactful opportunities to serve.

⁴ The full report that includes the comprehensive analysis from this study, a description of the research methodology and profiles and data on the organizations included in the study is available upon request from the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, the Jim Joseph Foundation and the Nathan Cummings Foundation.

Summary of the Current Jewish Service Learning Landscape

WHAT IS THE CURRENT SUPPLY AND DEMAND FOR JEWISH SERVICE LEARNING?

1. Few university-age Jews participate in Jewish Service Learning.

- **Approximately 3,100 university-age, Jewish young adults are participating in immersive Jewish term-of-service programs in 2007-08.** This number represents just one segment of the overall Jewish Service Learning landscape. The Jewish Coalition for Service, for example, estimates that in 2006,⁵ almost 6,000 teens, university- and post-university-age individuals participated in immersive Jewish Service Learning of one week or longer.

Beyond immersive service, it is important to acknowledge that there are many other Jewish service opportunities available that address the needs and interests of individuals across the full age spectrum. These opportunities include everything from intensive one-day service experiences to episodic service—the equivalent of drop-in volunteering. Many of these offerings are available through or coordinated by Jewish communal institutions such as day schools, Jewish Community Centers and Federations. No one is tracking the specific number of opportunities that exist or the level of community participation. But the impulse to serve is quite vital within the Jewish community. This is perhaps well exemplified by this year's J-Serve—a one day of service targeting Jewish teens that attracted more than 10,000 young people across the country.

Jewish Service Learning sits in the broader service context of the United States. Long-term service programs are led by AmeriCorps (75,000 participants per year) and service and conservation corps (200,000 participants annually), and many locally-based service programs also exist. School-based service-learning is part of the fabric of many K-12 educational institutions across the United States,

⁵ The most recent year for which data are available.

engaging upwards of 13 million youth each year. The broader service landscape also includes a myriad of one-day and episodic service experiences organized by community-based organizations, schools and businesses, providing opportunities for citizens of all ages to engage.

- **Fifteen organizations run the 25 Jewish Service Learning programs for university-age young adults included in this study.** According to the Jewish Coalition for Service, approximately 25 additional organizations run another 45 service programs, for a total of 70 different programs that provide young people of many ages with opportunities to participate in immersive term-of-service (one week or more).

2. Potential demand for Jewish Service Learning outpaces current participation.

- **The potential market of young Jewish adults for Jewish term-of-service exceeds the percentage of Jewish young adults currently participating.** While there are no definitive data on the U.S. Jewish young adult population, a Brandeis study released in January 2007 indicates that there are approximately 400,000 Jewish 18-24 year-olds currently in the United States (Saxe et al., 2007). The 3,113 Jewish young adults participating in Jewish Service Learning programs—short-, medium- or long-term—in 2007-08, represents less than 1% of the total age cohort.

In contrast, 30,000 young adults between the ages of 18 and 26 participated in Birthright Israel's 10 day trips to Israel in 2007 (see Exhibit 2). While Birthright Israel provides a different experience from Jewish Service Learning—it is a free, peer-group educational trip—its ability to recruit participants into a Jewish-identified experience reflects a level of interest and funding that is yet untapped by the Jewish Service Learning community.

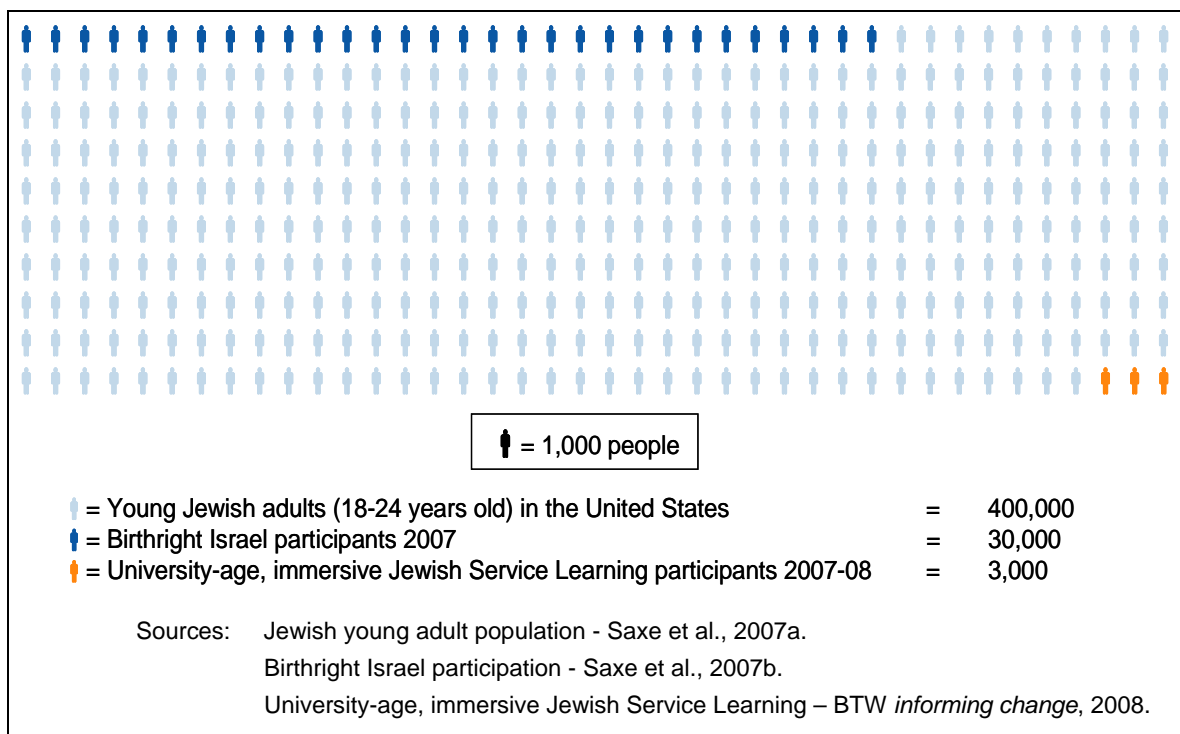
“Service is an important and a viable way of bringing Judaism into the 21st century.”

—Jewish Service Learning Practitioner

Exhibit 2

The Untapped Market for Jewish Service Learning

Estimated U.S. Jewish Young Adult (18-24) Population Compared to Birthright Israel 2007 Participants and Jewish Service Learning 2007-08 Participants



- **The majority of the immersive service programs in this study (86%) report having more applicants than they can accept or being able to fill their program slots.** Some programs cite having a significantly greater number of applicants than slots available—the (long-term) JDC Jewish Service Corps has an acceptance rate of 20% and AVODAH accepts approximately one-third of its applicants—while a few regularly face costly vacancies. Applications for well-known, high-quality national service programs also consistently exceed the number of service spaces available. City Year and Teach for America, for example, both report that they are able to accept only a small percentage of applicants—25% and 17%, respectively.^{6,7}

⁶ “City Year Application and Selection Process,” n.d.; Teach for America based on interview on 12/5/2007.

⁷ The Corporation for National and Community Service does not collect data on overall program acceptance rates because these can vary widely based on the program model and location.

- **Jewish young adults indicate a commitment to civic engagement and being agents of civic change.** Sixty-four percent of Jewish young adults report that “making the world a better place” is an essential element of their Jewish identity, and 56% report participating in some kind of community service or volunteer activity in the past year (Greenberg, 2006).

WHO IS PARTICIPATING IN JEWISH SERVICE LEARNING AND TO WHAT END?

1. Short-term alternative break experiences predominate.

- **The vast majority (88%) of immersive Jewish Service Learning program participants are engaging in short-term alternative break trips,** with almost equal numbers of participants in medium-term and long-term programs (6% each). The short-term Jewish Service Learning programs are operating in a context with other secular and faith-based alternative break trips. Break Away and Habitat for Humanity’s Collegiate Challenge are the two largest secular alternative break programs in the U.S., respectively taking 35,000 and 13,700 participants annually.⁸ Local groups (e.g., alumni, campus-based organizations, community-based organizations, etc.) run countless other alternative break programs on college campuses.
- **Short-term programs are predominantly part of the work of a larger organization.** All but one (92%) of the short-term Jewish Service Learning programs in this study are operated by a Jewish organization that includes additional programming; the mission of the larger organization drives the design of the service program. By contrast, 50% of long-term programs are stand-alone entities solely dedicated to service.

“People want to be part of something larger than themselves...take a look at why [Jewish Service Learning] should be a movement and why people are inspired by what it is.”

—Secular Service-Learning Practitioner

⁸ “What is an Alternative Break,” 2006; “Habitat for Humanity Youth Programs Summary Report,” 2007.

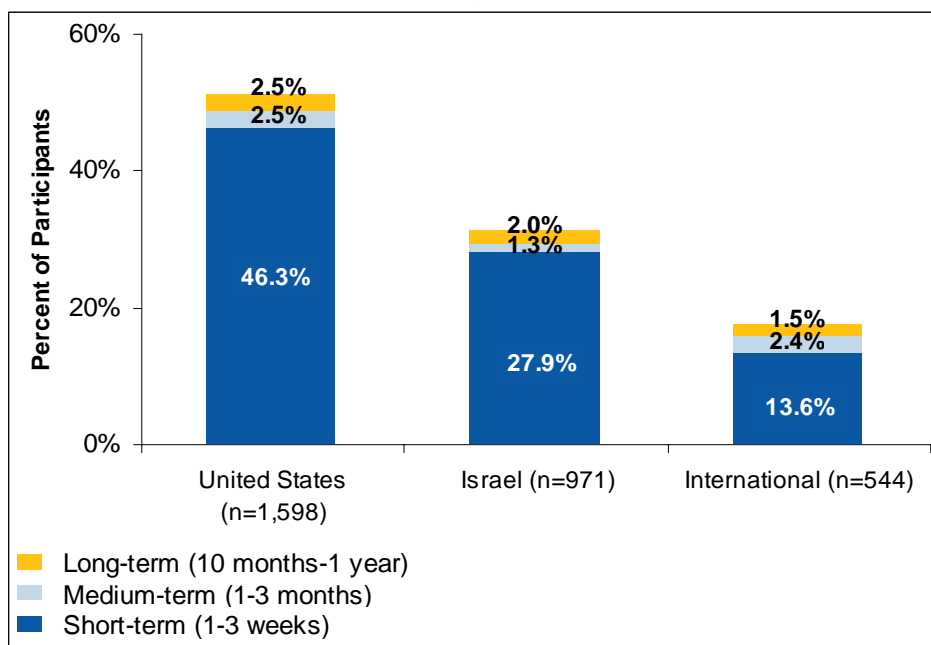
2. Equal numbers of university-age Jewish young adults serve in the United States and abroad.

- **Half of the young adults in Jewish Service Learning programs are serving in the United States.** Exhibit 3 shows that currently 1,598, or slightly more than half (51.3%), of all participants are serving in programs in the United States; the rest serve in Israel (31.2%) or other international locations (17.5%).

Exhibit 3

Most Jewish Service Learning Is in the U.S. and Short-Term

Percent of Participants in U.S. Immersive University-Age Jewish Service Learning Programs in 2007-08 by Length and Region of Service (n=3,113)



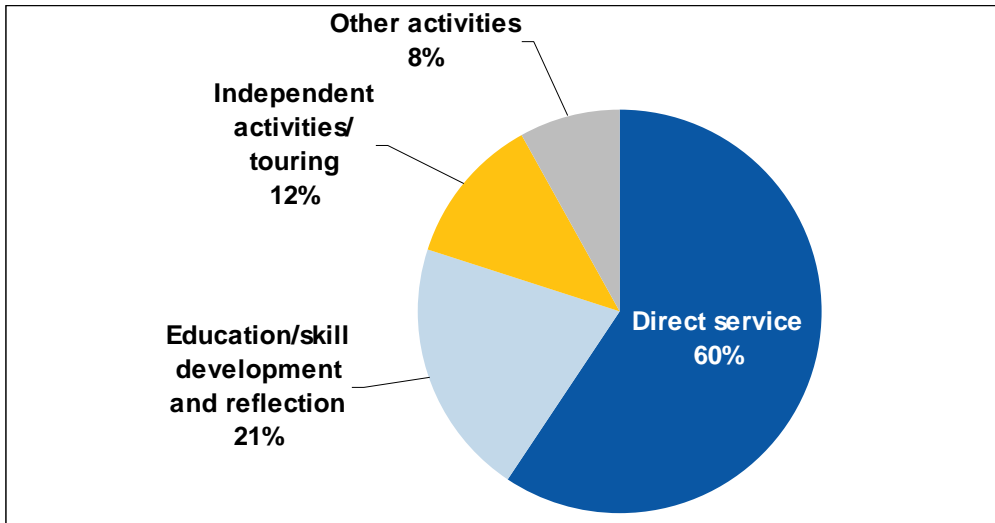
3. Jewish Service Learning programs intend to influence young people’s Jewish learning and identity and provide authentic service; other intended impacts vary by program model.

- **Program participants spend the majority (60% on average) of their time doing direct service work**, and almost a quarter (21% on average) of their time on knowledge acquisition, skill development and reflection (see Exhibit 4).

Exhibit 4

Most Time Is Spent Providing Direct Service

Percent of Time Spent Each Week on Direct Service, Learning and Other Activities among Immersive, University-Age Jewish Service Learning Programs, 2007-08 (n= 20)⁹



- **A high priority outcome of immersive Jewish Service Learning programs is to provide “authentic” service that addresses real needs**, from building houses to organic farming, from restoring an environmental habitat to tutoring children. This focus on real work, not make-work, is mirrored in non-sectarian service program models.
- **Programs provide unique Jewish learning opportunities.** Programs refer to and incorporate Jewish texts into discussions to illustrate connections between service and Jewish values and culture. In addition to structured learning, the denominational and observance variation among participants creates an environment ripe for understanding differences in traditions, practices and perspectives. All programs observe Shabbat as a group, and participants are required to come to agreement on the nature and level of communal observance. Many programs also organize conversations with Jewish leaders in host communities and encourage participants to engage in discussions about being Jewish in those locations.
- **Service location influences design and intended impact.** Overseas programs have an additional intended impact of building personal connections and understanding between the young people

The first priority of Jewish Service Learning programs is to address a need within a community, and through that contribution, to educate participants about those communities and the underlying issues behind their needs, while engaging participants in learning and reflection about their Jewish identity.

⁹ Time distribution information was not available for one-fifth of programs reviewed.

“This is about the kind of community we want to create and the people we want to raise...It’s ultimately about making society safer, healthier and stronger, which can start within the Jewish community and emanate out.”

—Foundation Representative

who are serving and communities in the developing world where they serve. In some cases, participants are acting as ambassadors and are the first Jewish people these communities have encountered. Israel-based programs use service as a tool for generating a deep connection with Israel and, by extension, an ongoing commitment to Israel. Service in the United States tends to place priority on having participants better understand social and political challenges within the United States.

4. Program partnerships are key to participant recruitment and providing authentic service.

Jewish Service Learning programs follow the lead of their secular service counterparts by relying heavily on campus-based organizations to recruit young adults. They mostly create partnerships with local staff of Hillel¹⁰ and, to varying degrees, other campus-based organizations. Programs also partner with community-based organizations to identify and lead the service projects.

WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATE OF JEWISH SERVICE LEARNING?

1. Jewish Service Learning is an emergent practice.

- **Jewish Service Learning programs are relatively new.** While most of the medium- and long-term immersive Jewish Service Learning programs in this study were in operation by 2000, all thirteen of the short-term programs were started since that time (see Exhibit 5). In fact, six organizations started ten new alternative break trips for students in 2005 in response to Hurricane Katrina and the war in Northern Israel. Though not an immersive, university-age program, the growth of J-Serve over four years to include 10,000 teens in a day of service in 2008 is another sign of emerging interest and growth.

This recent proliferation in Jewish Service Learning sits against a backdrop of national service and service-learning, which experienced their largest growth trends in earlier decades. National service programs, which have their roots in early 20th century civic life and

¹⁰ The largest Jewish campus organization in the world, Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life provides opportunities for Jewish students at more than 500 colleges and universities to explore and celebrate their Jewish identity through its global network of regional centers, campus Foundations and Hillel student organizations.

grew in numbers starting in the 1960s,¹¹ proliferated in the 1990s with the launch of AmeriCorps.¹² Now approximately 75,000 young adults participate in AmeriCorps programs annually.

Service-learning started growing significantly in practice in the 1980s, influenced by the growth in experiential education during the 1970s. By the early 1990s, service-learning was a defined field, hastened in its growth not only by program implementation funds from the federal government's Learn & Serve program, but also by investments from private philanthropy specifically directed at field level development (McHugh, 2004). Service-learning is now an adopted academic and engagement strategy experienced by 13 million young people each year.

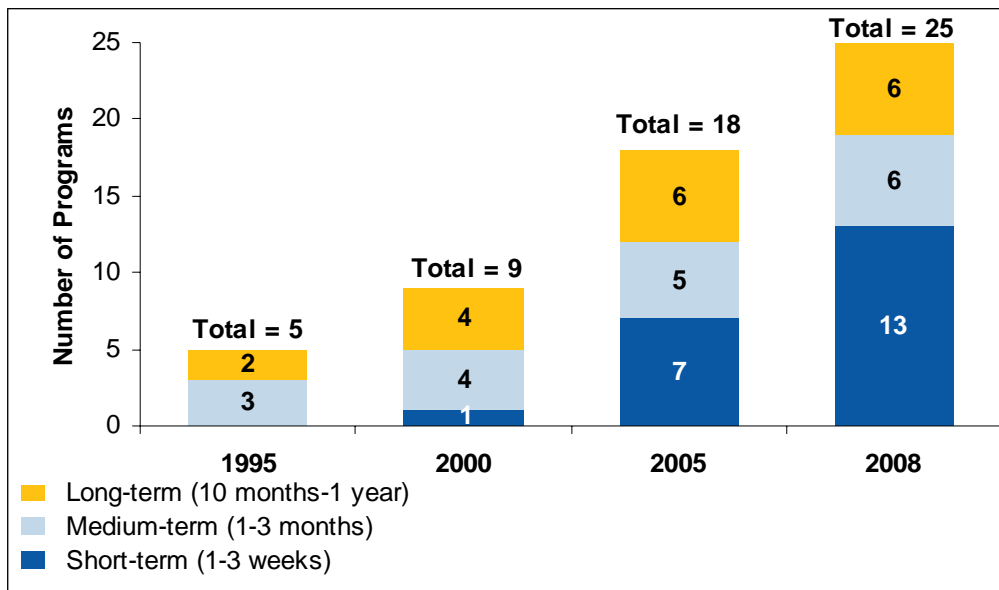
“One of the major impacts of the growth of Jewish service programs is that this generation is seeing the role that Jewish commitment plays in working on and solving difficult, complex, important social problems.”

—Jewish Service Learning Practitioner

Exhibit 5

Rapid Recent Proliferation of Jewish Service Learning Programs

Number of Immersive, University-Age Jewish Service Learning Programs by Year¹³



¹¹ The Peace Corps was established by Executive Order in 1961; VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) was established in 1964; RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program) was established in 1969.

¹² The National and Community Service Act, passed in 1990, provided federal grants for service-learning and a demonstration full-time national service programs; the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 created AmeriCorps; the Corporation for National and Community Service was also established in 1993.

¹³ This research designates all local Hillel campuses organizing individual alternative break programs as one program; while the earliest alternative break trip began in 2000, we estimate that the majority of campuses started between 2004 and 2005.

“We must approach Jewish service as an educational endeavor...That implies careful articulation of learning goals, modes of pedagogy and selecting competent people to lead this work.”

—Jewish Service Learning Practitioner

- **There have been early efforts through the Jewish Coalition for Service to create points of connection between programs.** The Jewish Coalition for Service (Coalition) was established in 2001 as a platform for program practitioners to represent their collective interests and “to inspire everyone in the Jewish community to dedicate a part of their lives to full-time, hands-on volunteer service.” The Coalition pursues its mission by providing centralized marketing for Jewish Service Learning programs, hosting an on-line network for Jewish Service Learning alumni and providing technical assistance, convenings and other programming for practitioners.
- **Jewish Service Learning lacks strong, independent leadership and infrastructure that can communicate a consistent message about the overall value of Jewish Service Learning—what it is and what it can accomplish.** According to many individuals interviewed for this study, there is a lack of vocal and commanding leadership beyond that which is associated with specific programs. There is also a need for a more visible and independent advocate for Jewish Service Learning than currently exists, beyond the current role and capacity of the Coalition—an advocate that can complete the weave between and among practitioners, build partnerships, generate and share knowledge and help build capacity within and across programs.
- **The Jewish Service Learning community is, as yet, too nascent to be considered a field.** The Jewish Service Learning programs themselves are only loosely connected to one another, though they have stated an interest in cultivating a “community of practice.” Collaborations are on the rise, as evidenced by Hillel’s 2007 conference for practitioners, some joint recruitment efforts, recent collaboration amongst Alternative Break practitioners and the Jewish Service Alumni Program, jointly led by AJWS and AVODAH. But these are isolated examples, and there is no single entity charged with responsibility for building connections and leveraging capacity both inside the community and from other sources across the secular and faith-based service communities. The portfolio of Jewish Service Learning programs has not yet acquired the standards, breadth of practice and shared knowledge associated with a field.¹⁴

¹⁴ As part of her work for the Academy for Education Development and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation’s Learning In Deed initiative, Dr. Melinda Fine outlines eleven essential elements of what constitutes a field, in the context of K-12 service-learning, as: 1) identity; 2) knowledge base; 3) workforce and leadership; 4) standard practice; 5) practice settings; 6) information exchange; 7) infrastructure for collaboration; 8) resources; 9) critical mass of support; 10) advocates and systemic support; and 11) systemic support (Fine, 2001).

2. There is interest among Jewish donors and funding institutions in Jewish Service Learning.

Key informant interviews with donors and representatives from philanthropic institutions reveal a good deal of interest in Jewish Service Learning. Funders express a range of reasons for their interest, from advancing Jewish learning to creating communities of meaning; from meeting pressing community needs to cultivating the next generation of engaged Jewish citizens. There is considerable interest in gaining a better understanding of the impact of Jewish Service Learning and, for some, there is already a commitment to greater promotion of and support for Jewish Service Learning.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE IMPACT OF JEWISH SERVICE LEARNING?

1. There are limited data on the outcomes of Jewish Service Learning.

- While most Jewish Service Learning programs collect participant feedback at the end of their programs, **few have conducted post-service assessments of impact or comparative studies on different program models.** Two important research studies are currently underway that are examining the impact of service on university-age participants' Jewish identity and service identity formation.¹⁵
- **The limited number of studies that do exist suggest that these programs have a positive effect on Jewish identity formation and social capital creation.** Participants in two AJWS programs—Alternative Break (AB) and International Jewish College Corps (IJCC)¹⁶—and in AVODAH reported that they became activists or professionals in the Jewish and social justice communities as a result of their service (Gottesman, 2004). Nearly 100% of participants in Leading Up North (LUN)—a two-week Jewish Service Learning trip to

“Our intention is to engage Jewish college students in service work with a model that encourages them to examine and wrestle with Jewish values and the applicability of those values to a life of service.”

—Jewish Service Learning Practitioner

¹⁵ United Jewish Communities (UJC) is partnering with the RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service at the University of Texas, Austin, to conduct a rigorous study of alumni from six of the largest Jewish Service Learning programs to understand the ways in which programs are shaping university-age participants' Jewish identity and service identity (i.e., civic engagement and sense of civic responsibility). The UJA-Federation of New York (UJA) is currently working with the Cohen Center of Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University to identify the connection between participants' Jewish identity and service identity.

¹⁶ AWJS' IJCC program is now called Volunteer Summer.

Israel in 2006-07—reported that they maintained or increased their already high levels of volunteering (for both the Jewish community and the general non-Jewish community) after returning home (Beck, 2007).

2. Positive secular service program outcomes predict favorably for Jewish Service Learning.

“It is about having deep personal connections that will catalyze people to look at injustices as Jews and see our obligation to respond to that as Jews.”

—Jewish Service Learning Practitioner

The broad body of research on secular service and service-learning demonstrates that high-quality programs produce meaningful results for the server and the served. When Jewish Service Learning programs are conducted with similar standards of quality, one can anticipate similar results in a Jewish context.

- High-quality service produces **community benefits**—benefits such as providing needed services (e.g., teaching, tutoring and mentoring to improve academic achievement and increased self-efficacy for recipients) and increasing the capacity of community-based organizations to provide additional services (e.g., through volunteer recruitment) (Dexter et al., 2004; Shelton et al., 2007).

In Jewish Service Learning...

Jewish Service Learning programs, utilizing similar service models, should produce comparable positive benefits for the vulnerable populations served and should increase capacity to meet pressing social needs.

“[I see...] Jewish service as an opportunity to connect young adults to a Jewish community that [many of them] presently have very little contact with.

—Jewish Service Learning Practitioner

- National service and service-learning programs **increase participants’ civic engagement**—giving young people the skills, motivation and commitment they need to actively participate in community life. Research has demonstrated that service increases participants’ sense of social responsibility, their connection to community and their knowledge about community problems (Anderson et al., 2007). Service participants also gain the skills they need to engage in civic life, and as a result, after their service they are more likely to vote, voice their views publicly and participate in community organizations (Billig et al., 2005; Jastrzab, et al., 2007).

In Jewish Service Learning...

Based on the evidence from secular service, it is reasonable to conclude that Jewish Service Learning will achieve comparable impacts for participants in terms of increasing engagement in Jewish civic life. It should increase young people’s connection to and engagement with the Jewish community—developing social capital among Jewish young adults and increasing their awareness of and commitment to Jewish communal institutions. In addition, Jewish Service Learning provides young Jews with the opportunity to connect to and understand other communities and social issues.

- Service-learning, which combines service with an explicit teaching and learning strategy, produces **positive learning results**, including improved academic achievement, ability to apply learnings to “the real world,” increased engagement in the learning process and an overall enjoyment of learning (Eyler et al., 2001; Follman, 1998; Weiler et al., 1998).

In Jewish Service Learning...

High-quality Jewish Service Learning includes a clear intention to convey Jewish teachings and Jewish knowledge. Given the correlation between service-learning and improved academic outcomes, it is reasonable to assume that Jewish Service Learning, when it incorporates well-designed Jewish education and curriculum, will produce comparable results. Participants should gain knowledge about Jewish text, culture and history, as well as a deeper understanding and appreciation of Jewish learning and Jewish life.

- National service and service-learning **positively influence personal and social development**, increasing self-efficacy, values development and leadership and positively influencing the pursuit of service-oriented careers (Anderson, et al., 2007; Shaffer, 1993).

In Jewish Service Learning...

The ability of Jewish Service Learning programs to foster a similar sense of personal responsibility in a Jewish context is critical for deepening Jewish identity among young adults, which encourages community continuity, leadership development and the pursuit of careers in Jewish communal organizations.

“They will return to their communities and campuses and be involved in service there and see it as an ongoing expression of being Jewish in the world.”

—Jewish Service Learning Practitioner

Examples of Positive Results from National Service and Service-Learning

Community Benefits – 93% of AmeriCorps service sites report that Corps members increase their capacity to service more clients, and 94% indicate that Corps members leverage additional volunteers from the community (Shelton et al., 2007).

Increased Civic Engagement – 87% of City Year alumni report three years after completing their year of service that City Year helps them exercise public responsibility and engage in community service (Anderson et al., 2007).

Positive Learning Results – Students in over half of the high-quality service-learning schools show moderate to strong positive gains on student achievement tests in language arts and/or reading, engagement in school, sense of educational accomplishment and homework completion (Weiler et al., 1998).

Improved Personal and Social Development – 92% of City Year alumni say their participation in City Year contributes to their ability to lead others to complete a task, and 90% say it helps them work with people from diverse backgrounds (Anderson et al., 2007). Students who engage in service-learning are more likely to increase their sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy (Shaffer, 1993).

3. Impacts vary according to the term and nature of the service.

Research demonstrates that there is a positive correlation between the time one spends in service and the impact of the service experience on attitudes, knowledge and behavior. Short-term programs have greater impact on the server but more limited effect on the community served, while longer term programs achieve more measurable benefit for both the community served and the server. Immersive service produces particular benefits related to building a sense of community and encouraging tolerance of and appreciation for diversity.

WHAT IS THE QUALITY AND CAPACITY OF WHAT EXISTS?

1. There are limits to the current Jewish Service Learning program capacity.

- **Current Jewish Service Learning programs need to address a variety of issues in order to maintain or increase quality and capacity.** Capacity and delivery challenges cited by practitioners, either directly or indirectly, include:
 - ◆ Scaling program models;
 - ◆ Defining a market niche for programs;
 - ◆ Securing adequate financial support;
 - ◆ Hiring and developing staff;
 - ◆ Better understanding the nature and level of demand;
 - ◆ Recruitment;
 - ◆ Sharing knowledge to increase efficiency and effectiveness;
 - ◆ Establishing and strengthening relationships with partners for program delivery; and
 - ◆ Building internal organizational capacity.
- **Current programs want to grow responsibly.** Most Jewish Service Learning programs want to expand and serve more participants (see Exhibit 6). Their growth plans are predominantly incremental—doubling or tripling in the next few years. Many programs are already growing in 2008 and want to assess this short-term growth before determining next steps. The complexity of these programs and the need for quality in many areas (e.g., education, partnerships with community groups, staffing, alumni follow-up) challenge the capacity of programs to grow or make growth particularly challenging.

These growth plans and capacity needs suggest that in order to significantly increase the number of Jewish Service Learning opportunities available—to increase capacity from the current 3,100 to 10% of the total 18-24 year-old population, or 40,000—it will take a commitment on two levels. First, it will require a commitment to the existing programs to enhance their capacity, both in terms of quality and growth (e.g., if they do all triple in size, they would serve close to 10,000 young adults per year). Second, it will require a commitment to support program innovation.

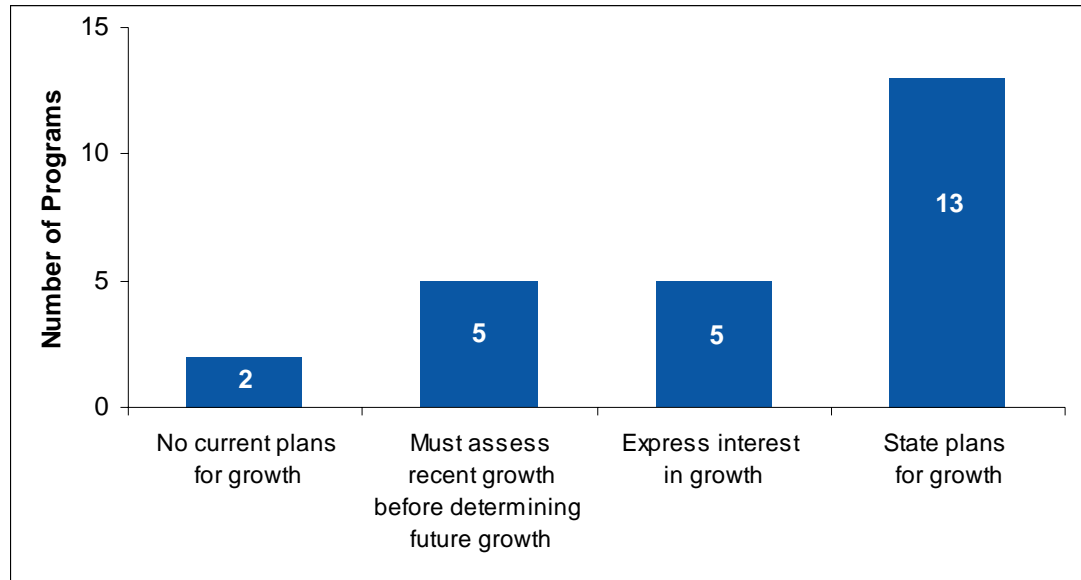
“We will need serious money on the table to grow our programs and bridge the gap between the cost to put on the program and the tuition... [We also need] training in the field.”

—Jewish Service Learning Practitioner

Exhibit 6

Programs Want to Grow Responsibly

Immersive, University-Age Jewish Service Learning Programs' Intentions for Growth, 2007-08
(n= 25)

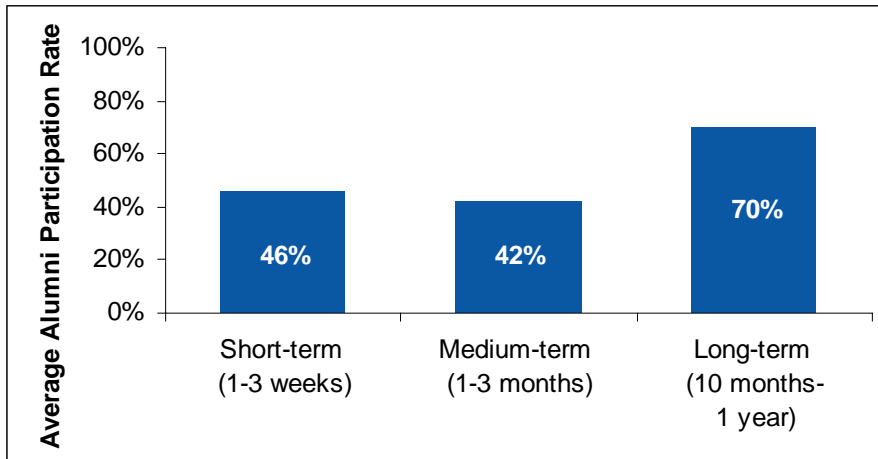


- **Programs cite participant fees as a significant deterrent for prospective participants.** Fees can vary widely, from no cost to \$9,000, with higher costs associated with longer term service. Some program fees include travel expenses; others require participants to incur the expenses of their travel. While a limited number of scholarships and stipends are available, and some long-term service programs provide living stipends, programs claim that participant fees are a significant barrier to increasing participation.
- **Programs aspire to create lasting ties with alumni.** On average, 70% of long-term program alumni remain active—to varying degrees—through alumni programming, compared with 42% and 46% of alumni in medium- and short-term programs, respectively (see Exhibit 7). While most programs include post-service follow-up activities, short-term programs find it more challenging to maintain post-service connections. They cite costs and staffing as the barriers to maintaining meaningful contact with alumni. There are efforts underway to more actively engage service alumni, in particular through the Jewish Coalition for Service's on-line network and through the new Jewish Service Alumni Initiative, jointly led by AJWS and AVODAH.

Exhibit 7

Long-Term Participants Are More Likely to Be Active Alumni

Average Percentage of Immersive, University-Age Jewish Service Learning Participants Active in Alumni Programming
(n= 11)¹⁷



2. Program quality is mixed and there a need for uniform standards.

- **Many practitioners acknowledge that they are striving for, but not always achieving quality.** Jewish Service Learning program practitioners and observers—including funders and community leaders—note the inconsistent quality across programs. A few programs are regularly cited as leading the field, and many others are seen as having some elements of quality. Programs commonly identify the following eight indicators of quality, which are process- rather than outcome-oriented:
 1. Service work that meets a need and is meaningful to the participant;
 2. Participant education about the root causes of the problems the service is addressing;
 3. Adequate time for participants to reflect on and discuss their service and its impact;
 4. Effective partnerships with the communities in which participants are working;
 5. Motivated participants who join the program with a desire to serve, not simply to socialize;

¹⁷ Alumni participation rate information was not provided by half of programs reviewed.

- 6. A strong Jewish context for the work, including structured Jewish learning;
 - 7. Experienced educators and trip leaders; and
 - 8. Post-service follow-up and activities that provide participants with continuity related to their service.
- **There are no consistent standards of quality among Jewish Service Learning programs.**

As demonstrated by the secular service-learning field, universal standards of quality that account for different models can provide guidance for new program design and set the bar for effective practice. Standards can cover issues such as the skills and experiences required of instructors and the amount of time required for various program activities (e.g., direct service, Jewish learning, reflection). The conversation about the nature of standards has begun in the Jewish Service Learning community; for example, current Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation grantees are beta-testing a set of standards. However, there is a distance to go before standards of quality are articulated (e.g. specifying what training and experience is required of staff) and universally embraced by all Jewish Service Learning programs.

WHAT LESSONS CAN WE LEARN FROM OTHERS?

1. **Secular service programs have successfully scaled when they attend to community demand, quality, partnerships and leadership.**

- **Secular service program growth has been stimulated by high community demand for service** (e.g., schools needing tutors to support under-performing students). Jewish Service Learning program expansion will depend on programs identifying real community needs and organizing effective and meaningful direct service projects that address those needs. This will require partnerships between Jewish Service Learning programs and community-based organizations that are anchored in and successfully addressing the needs of their communities.
- **Attention to quality is a key for successful program growth.** Secular service programs that have successfully scaled have greatly benefited from articulating the key elements of quality in their programs, and the components of their models that can be adjusted

“To replicate successfully, the clarity of the program model is key. You need documentation to describe it and people to disseminate it. But ultimately you need people who can articulate its soul.”

—Secular Service-Learning Practitioner

based on different circumstances. Before Jewish Service Learning programs undertake significant expansion efforts, it will be important to follow suit and clarify the essential components that define their quality (and brand).

- **The quality, breadth and creativity of community partnerships provide the foundation for program expansion.** Partners are particularly important for understanding local community needs and developing authentic service projects. Active partnerships expand capacity and access to expertise in planning, marketing and other aspects of organizational development. In addition, there is a growing trend of service organizations partnering with one another, particularly among faith-based programs looking to provide interfaith service experiences. Jewish Service Learning programs would benefit from exploring these kinds of partnerships, in particular tapping into the capacity of high-quality secular service programs.
- **Strong leadership is essential for significant growth; the most successful programs have leaders who are active in growing the broader service movement.** This kind of visionary leadership includes having an entrepreneurial attitude and absolute conviction about the value proposition of service. Leaders of high-quality Jewish Service Learning programs will need to be supported to achieve their vision.

“Service opportunities must be built on principles of collaboration and partnership, critical thinking and reflective practice, capacity-building and sustainability.”

—Jewish Service Learning Practitioner

2. Every growing field or movement is catalyzed by an organizing platform.

While secular service and service-learning have developed over decades, these fields were propelled forward at different points in time with significant and visible leadership, financial investment and the establishment of central infrastructure organizations. Leadership has been provided by the nation’s three most recent Presidents, all of whom called upon the nation to serve and used their good offices to advance that call. The National and Community Service Trust Act helped direct resources and attention to service and volunteering. The National Service-Learning Clearinghouse was established to generate and manage knowledge development and transfer. On an annual basis there are a number of national gatherings held to facilitate partnerships and the exchange of practice. Finally there is permanent organizational leadership, advocacy and coordination provided by the Corporation for Community and National Service and the Points of Light Foundation.

Infrastructure can follow or lead the development of a field. The Foundation for Jewish Camp and the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education offer worthy examples of how infrastructure within the Jewish community can be used to elevate the importance of an issue, garner resources, or leverage existing capacity to achieve a sum greater than the parts. Founded in the late 1990s, both organizations provide funding, technical expertise and leadership and have made significant strides to strengthen and expand their respective fields. Given the current state of Jewish Service Learning—an emergent practice that is beginning to demonstrate promise for strong impacts—an organizing platform could move Jewish Service Learning to a new level.

A Path for Growth

The work to build Jewish Service Learning and generate more breadth and depth of opportunity will require leadership, a considerable financial investment and a long-term commitment. The strategy must be multi-faceted, generating an awareness that inspires young people to serve (demand) and a commitment that supports and strengthens existing as well as new programs (supply). The strategy must ensure that Jewish Service Learning meets rigorous standards of quality and is appropriately leveraging partnerships with secular service so that as demand to serve increases, high-quality opportunities to serve keep pace.

Based on the findings from the landscape analysis, we offer four practical next steps—what we are calling “keystones”—to make Jewish Service Learning more prevalent and powerful. We are deliberate in choosing the word “keystone” to describe these building blocks. A keystone is something on which other things depend. We believe that the productive development of Jewish Service Learning depends on the elements that follow:

Keystone One: Quality, capacity and growth

Keystone Two: Incubation and innovation

Keystone Three: Leadership and community commitment

Keystone Four: Coalescence – a center for Jewish Service Learning

In the sections that follow, we describe the nature of each keystone and offer examples of the kind of philanthropic investments that can bring them to fruition. The first three keystones are offered as stand-alone efforts, and the fourth offers ideas for combining them all on a unified platform.

The strategy must provide an engine for Jewish Service Learning that powers its progress, tirelessly making the philosophical, rhetorical and literal connections that position Jewish Service Learning as a pathway for young leaders to develop their civic consciousness and community commitment.

Quality, Capacity and Growth

The landscape analysis reveals evidence of deep commitment and energy within existing immersive Jewish Service Learning programs. There is experience and expertise to be leveraged and built upon, and there is more capacity and quality to be unleashed within many of the efforts already underway.

A critical element of advancing the call for Jewish Service Learning is to support the efforts of those pioneers who have toiled in an under-resourced field—to engage them to grow their programs and to realize the full potential of these endeavors.

RECOMMENDATION

Provide a ***new stream of significant financial support*** that enables ***existing programs*** to address issues of ***quality***, improve and demonstrate program ***impact*** and significantly ***increase capacity***. Funding should encourage collaboration rather than competition, reduce and standardize costs, and include a provision of technical assistance to facilitate success.

GOAL

The goal of funding existing programs is to improve program quality, increase program capacity and position high-quality programs to grow through program expansion or consolidation/mergers.

SUCCESS

If this funding is successful, Jewish Service Learning programs will:

- Adopt quality standards of practice;¹⁸
- Commit to and demonstrate impact and value;
- Engage in productive collaborations; and
- Increase their capacity to serve.

¹⁸ There is a need to define and enforce quality standards. As Jewish Service Learning continues to evolve, there will be an ongoing need to refine those standards based on new information, research and program evaluation.

If this funding is successful, some programs will fail to thrive and others will grow. Some programs may emerge from the process as “centers of excellence” and serve as resources to peers.

OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Since the goal of this funding stream is to assess and improve the quality of existing Jewish Service Learning programs, there is value in offering two stages of financial support and combining the provision of funds with the availability of technical assistance and/or resource referrals. A brief description of a two-stage grants process follows. This process, if implemented, would help to identify, nurture and ultimately support high-quality Jewish Service Learning.

Stage I – Assessment

Stage I funds would be made available through a simple application process through which programs would have to demonstrate a commitment to honestly assess their capacity and develop a plan to improve. Examples of the kinds of activities that these grants would support include:

- Assess the program’s stage of development;
- Acquire assistance in program design, planning and evaluation;
- Test new strategies for participant recruitment;
- Clarify and define job roles, responsibilities and criteria;
- Implement staff training and development;
- Assess the feasibility of a merger; and/or
- Explore or generate new program-based partnerships/collaborations.

Stage I funding should enable virtually all existing programs to gain insight into their strengths and opportunities for development. This insight should position the programs to make better choices about priorities, core competencies and capacity to grow. Once a program successfully completes a Stage I assessment project, it would then be eligible to apply for Stage II funding. The level of support for Stage I funding would be calibrated to the nature of the assessment and the size of the program.

Stage II Funding – Implementation

Stage II funding would be allocated on a competitive basis and effectively reward “best in class.” It would be made available to programs that had, on the basis of their Stage I assessment (or a comparable comprehensive assessment done with other financial or technical support), developed a strong and clear plan for action. Programs would apply for and use Stage II funding to implement plans for improving quality, capacity and/or growth as identified in Stage I projects.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Providing Jewish Service Learning programs with financial support is important because many of the programs that exist are doing good work but have not been the beneficiaries of sufficient attention or support. The goal of making a new financial commitment to quality, capacity and growth is to provide programs with the investment and recognition they require to make more and better contributions. Significant growth of the Jewish Service Learning field will depend, in part, on identifying and then amplifying the experience and expertise of existing practitioners.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

In this scenario, Stage I funding should be offered with very few strings attached. As a result, some programs may receive Stage I grants even though they have not yet demonstrated impact or achieved success. Also, some existing programs may not make it to Stage II. This may cause tension among current programs, but this process is essential to the overall advancement of quality and practice. In addition, some existing practitioners may not support this process and may attempt to undermine the investments.

KEYSTONE TWO

Incubation and Innovation

Based on our review of the Jewish Service Learning landscape and a particular focus on immersive, university-age programs, we find that the current level and spectrum of program opportunities, the delivery systems and the degree of innovation may be inadequate to the challenge of both inspiring and meeting potential significant new demand. It is essential to invest first in current programs and nurture their continued evolution and growth, but those investments alone will not achieve the tremor required to significantly shift the ground and elevate Jewish Service Learning in the Jewish community. There is a need to invent, test and refine program models and delivery systems to capture new markets and deliver results.

RECOMMENDATION

Provide a ***new stream of financial support*** dedicated to enlisting social entrepreneurs as well as existing practitioners in ***designing and testing new models of Jewish Service Learning programs and delivery systems***, and to ***significantly encourage partnerships*** with secular service organizations to grow capacity.

GOAL

The goal of funding incubation and innovation is to:

- Generate more diversity in opportunities to serve, responding to the broad spectrum of interests, characteristics, passions and inclinations of the Jewish community;
- Increase the number of Jewish Service Learning opportunities available;
- Inspire and support program and field-building leadership for Jewish Service Learning;
- Encourage diverse program partnerships;
- Establish a basis for evaluating and comparing models for purposes of defining quality, codifying standards and improving practice; and,
- Unleash creativity to generate new, innovative models for service programs.

SUCCESS

If this funding is successful, there will be:

- New leaders of Jewish Service Learning programs;
- An increase in opportunities to serve;
- An increase in the number and type of young Jews engaging in Jewish Service Learning;
- New partnerships between Jewish organizations and secular service organizations that leverage the capacity that exists in the national service, service-learning and volunteering community; and
- New knowledge about the market for Jewish Service Learning and the ingredients of success.

OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

A key goal of this funding is to inspire innovation, incubate programs, foster partnerships and create a basis for learning about quality and impact. This strategy argues for adopting a focus on a specific age cohort and program design for a given grant cycle so that it is possible to leverage learning across the portfolio of entrepreneurs and have a strong basis for comparative analysis across age-specific models and delivery systems.

This funding should be administered through an organization that can facilitate new and emerging efforts, serve as a fiscal sponsor if needed, monitor program development, broker organizational relationships, support cross-program learning, document progress, oversee program and model evaluation, codify what is learned and widely disseminate promising practices to further knowledge and promote adoption.

It is important to acknowledge that the goal here is NOT to generate a plethora of new nonprofit organizations, but rather to provide philanthropic capital to test new ideas both outside and inside existing nonprofit programs and organizations. In this way, innovation can be evaluated and incubated, with only those efforts that prove worthy of ongoing support emerging as independent nonprofits or programs within independent nonprofits.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

This strategy draws attention to Jewish Service Learning and rewards creativity within the field. It serves as a marketing and messaging tool and provides an organizing framework for documenting how programs are implemented, the nature of the challenges they face and the accomplishments they achieve. It provides a way to build the knowledge that is essential to the development of a community of practice. It also tests and

requires proof of concept without necessitating the establishment and associated costs of an incorporated nonprofit, and by so doing, manages risk. Finally, this strategy has the potential to unleash a new cadre of entrepreneurial leaders.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Notwithstanding that the intention is to generate new investments from new investors, existing Jewish Service Learning practitioners may feel threatened by the introduction of new service models and approaches. There may be little appetite for innovation. In addition, not all new models will succeed, and some funders may be disappointed by failure associated with this form of risk capital.

KEYSTONE THREE

Leadership and Community Commitment

“[Jewish Service Learning] could be the next big thing...as Birthright Israel has emerged into something larger and more successful than we expected. This is the right issue at the right time.”

—Foundation Representative

There is already a considerable buzz in the Jewish community about the power and potential of Jewish Service Learning to inspire young people—to capture and direct their energy, imaginations and contributions. The work ahead is to convert this conversation into a community-wide expectation and advance Jewish Service Learning as a common value that is deeply and broadly embraced. To move what is now a practice to what could be a movement, action must be taken and attention must be paid to what is said about Jewish Service Learning, who says it and to whom it is said.

The market challenge is to create a product, a message and messengers sufficiently compelling to motivate participation, followed by an experience that meets or exceeds expectations. Given that Jewish Service Learning lacks a robust voice (beyond individual organizations), it would be ill-advised to only “build it” and hope that “they will come.”

To achieve a pervasive sensibility of the calling to serve and an equally ubiquitous opportunity to serve, the Jewish community needs a deliberate and thoughtful leadership and communications strategy, beyond the promotion of individual programs, to define and give voice to the value of Jewish Service Learning.

RECOMMENDATION

Convene a Jewish Service Learning **leadership council**, including representatives from the business, public, nonprofit and philanthropic sectors, to serve as the voice for the value and ethic of Jewish Service Learning, to **guide the vision and direction** of Jewish Service Learning and to marshal a **marketing and communications strategy** on its behalf.

GOAL

The goal is to enlist community spokespeople—individuals who are leaders in their fields—to use their voices and influence in support of the value and ethic of Jewish Service Learning and to define and promote Jewish Service Learning as a fundamental part of a meaningful Jewish life.

SUCCESS

If this effort is successful, there will be:

- New voices and leadership for the value and ethic of Jewish Service Learning;
- Increased visibility of Jewish Service Learning in many parts of the Jewish community and across sectors;
- More demand for Jewish Service Learning by young people;
- More supply of high-quality Jewish Service Learning opportunities that reflect the interests and passions of the target market;
- More research and writing on the value and outcomes of Jewish Service Learning;
- New partnerships across sectors that generate both new demand and new service opportunities; and
- A shift in the cultural norm and an expectation in the community for Jewish youth to engage in Jewish Service Learning.

OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

A Jewish Service Learning leadership council will be comprised of individuals who volunteer their time and have no personal or professional stake in a specific Jewish Service Learning organization. Council members will represent all sectors—from business to government and in between. Members, recruited on the basis of their field accomplishments as well as their personal experience with service as a powerful influence in their professional and/or Jewish lives, will be asked to serve as ambassadors—speaking, writing and actively promoting the value and ethic of Jewish Service Learning. The council itself will help develop and guide a marketing and communications strategy intended to generate interest in and community support for Jewish Service Learning.

The marketing and communications strategy is likely to include tactics that range across different media sources and target different age groups. Examples of activities that could be included in such a strategy are: commissioned essays on the value of Jewish Service Learning; gatherings of spiritual and community leaders to debate how Jewish Service Learning could be better employed to address domestic and international issues; employing web-based tools including blogging and social networking; and, a community market analysis to understand the interests and preferences of teens and young adults.

“The key piece is to invest more in...the leaders... You need intentional resources and strategies to grow.”

—Secular Service
Practitioner

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

In order to build a field of Jewish Service Learning, it will be necessary to find and give voice to those people who understand and believe in Jewish Service Learning and to deploy their voices strategically. Leadership and marketing and communications will help to move the issue of Jewish Service Learning from the margins to the center of the community conversation.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

There are at least two risks associated with this recommendation. One is that it may be difficult to find individuals representing a good cross-section of sectors who are sufficiently committed to the issue to give the time and talent the leadership council requires. Second, unless very well staffed and supported, the council could end up as a body of figureheads who are not fully or effectively deployed.

KEYSTONE FOUR

Coalescence – A Center for Jewish Service Learning

Every serious social and cultural programmatic endeavor to effect meaningful community change is either born of an independent organizing framework or eventually gives rise to one. The reason is that program efforts on their own (and even bound together) inevitably operate from a place of self-interest and competitive concern that inhibits innovation and constrains inquiry.

In the case of Jewish Service Learning, in order to achieve a value that exceeds the sum of the program parts, there is a need for an independent platform capable of:

- Giving voice to the value and ethic of Jewish Service Learning;
- Defining and articulating its purpose; and
- Securing the resources required to advance and improve the practice and impact.

RECOMMENDATION

Establish a center for Jewish Service Learning, empowered by a compelling and purposeful mission, supported by a commitment of resources and governed by high-powered visionary leaders. This platform needs to ***build and support a movement*** that establishes Jewish Service Learning as a common expectation for all young Jews and enables the continued growth of authentic, high-quality Jewish Service Learning programs.

GOAL

A center for Jewish Service Learning will provide a visible, capable and accountable “home” for the work of Jewish Service Learning—a platform for partnership and a delivery system for support. The goal of having a center is to:

- Significantly increase the visibility of Jewish Service Learning within the community;
- Identify, organize and deliver resources (financial and otherwise) to support program development and growth;

“I want to hear how other [practitioners] are doing similar roll-outs and thinking and working with those leaders on how to move from a smaller program to a larger program. I would really value sharing knowledge—creating a learning community.”

—Jewish Service Learning Practitioner

- Support the development and implementation of authentic, high-quality Jewish Service Learning;
- Generate and aggregate knowledge related to the value and practice of Jewish Service Learning;
- Generate and test ideas that maximize the value of Jewish Service Learning as a pathway to Jewish identity, community leadership and civic contribution;
- Establish partnerships at the national and regional level with institutions that align with the needs and interests of Jewish Service Learning (e.g., national and faith-based service and volunteering organizations, college campus associations, national nonprofits, etc.) in order to accelerate the learning and growth of Jewish Service Learning;
- Understand and increase demand for Jewish Service Learning; and
- Establish standards of quality and accountability for practice and impact.

SUCCESS

If a center for Jewish Service Learning is successful, there will be:

- The value of Jewish Service Learning will be more clearly and consistently defined, and it will be more broadly understood and embraced;
- A repository for knowledge and relevant resources that is known and widely used among Jewish Service Learning practitioners;
- A dramatic increase in philanthropic investment in Jewish Service Learning;
- An increase in research and evaluation of Jewish Service Learning;
- A deeper understanding and adoption of good practice and standards of quality;
- An exponential increase in the number of young people engaged in Jewish Service Learning and stronger networks of Jewish Service Learning alumni.
- New and more opportunities to engage in Jewish Service Learning;
- New partnerships with national, secular and faith-based service and volunteering organizations; and
- Strong and evident advocates for Jewish Service Learning among Jewish organizations and philanthropic institutions, as well as across the business and public sector.

Mission of a Center for Jewish Service Learning

To build and support a movement that establishes Jewish Service Learning as a common expectation for all young Jews and that supports the development of authentic, high-quality Jewish Service Learning.

OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

A center for Jewish Service Learning should be fully independent of the program delivery system. It should have strong and influential governing leadership and a professional leader who is a passionate proponent of Jewish Service Learning with the gravitas to move easily and effectively in circles of potential partners, advocates and funders. Ideally, this platform should have a limitless supply of good advice and resources (on its own, by referral and through the practitioner network) with respect to quality and standards. As a result, it should raise the profile and power of Jewish Service Learning in the Jewish community and beyond.

A center for Jewish Service Learning, if adequately supported and appropriately governed, will be positioned to lead activities that stimulate, support and facilitate the development and growth of Jewish Service Learning. Given the nascent stage of Jewish Service Learning, it will be important to develop this centralized platform in a purposeful and controlled fashion, ensuring that the infrastructure is sized proportionally.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

To make Jewish Service Learning better understood, more effectively developed and more widely embraced, leadership needs to rise far above any single specific program. This leadership needs to offer a vision and help advance the pursuit of that vision; it needs to provide inspiration and translation in order to maintain high aspirations while also supporting programs as they function day-to-day. The community needs organized, capable and accountable leadership that is endowed with the capacity to strategically deploy resources in support of high-impact, high-quality practice. A center for Jewish Service Learning not only provides an “address” for Jewish Service Learning writ large, but enables the development and execution of a coherent action agenda.

“If you’re going to do it, be in it for the long term. Carve out a niche, think it through and put the dollars behind it. Provide real leadership in this arena.”

—Secular Service Practitioner

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

In a nascent environment where many immersive Jewish Service Learning programs are emerging, the launch of a significant infrastructure organization could overwhelm the community of practitioners. In effect, the house could be too big for the neighborhood. A center may get too far ahead of the practice. Therefore, it will be important to scale the growth of the infrastructure organization appropriately to the growth of this community of practice.

Conclusion

Jewish Service Learning has much to offer. It is a practice that engages the hearts, minds and energy of young people. It cultivates a sense of personal purpose and contribution; it teaches important lessons about the challenges and issues facing the nation and the larger world; it offers an education in Jewish values and history that provides a context for making choices and taking action; and it produces positive and visible benefits in the communities where the service takes place.

With all of these powerful impacts, the question this research raises is not whether Jewish Service Learning can provide a critical path to Jewish civic engagement, or cultivate a sense of Jewish identity or engage young people in solving critical social problems or generate lifelong relationships that bond and build a sense of community. Evidence strongly suggests and history shows that Jewish Service Learning, if executed well with clear intention, can accomplish these objectives.

The question then, is whether the Jewish community will fully seize the opportunity to develop the potential that Jewish Service Learning holds. The work ahead is the work of building deep, strong and broad based support for an idea whose time has truly come.

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