



# The Influence of Immersive Jewish Outdoor, Food, and Environmental Education

A Case Study of Programs Supported by  
UJA-Federation of New York



Introduction

Research on Immersive Jewish Outdoor, Food & Environmental Education Experiences

Over the past decade, observers of Jewish education have seen a growing interest and participation in experiences that integrate Jewish learning with food, the outdoors, and environmental issues. Philanthropists and practitioners have invested time and resources to develop new initiatives and organizations that provide learning opportunities that address these issues.

In 2013, a group of funders and Jewish educational practitioners designed a study to explore immersive Jewish outdoor, food and environmental education programming, coined JOFEE for the purposes of this study.<sup>1</sup> By exploring JOFEE’s programs, participants and professionals, the study aims to make meaning of immersive JOFEE experiences for funders, practitioners, and community leaders.

This case study is a companion piece to the national study of immersive JOFEE experiences. It explores immersive JOFEE programs supported by United Jewish Appeal - Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York, Inc. (UJA-Federation of New York). . Data used in this case study include a survey of over 325 participants in the 11 immersive JOFEE programs funded by UJA-Federation of New York,<sup>2</sup> (see exhibit on the

following page) taken from a survey of immersive JOFEE participants,<sup>3</sup> focus groups with immersive JOFEE program alumni,<sup>4</sup> interviews with local program professionals, and documentation about UJA-Federation of New York’s involvement with JOFEE. The case study explores how immersive JOFEE programs supported by UJA-Federation of New York:

- Support Jewish identity building initiatives;
- Support new models of Jewish community;
- Identify opportunities to strengthen Jewish gateway institutions<sup>5</sup> and other Jewish institutions;
- Build pathways and opportunities for collaboration; and
- Encourage young adults to experiment with, shape and deepen their individual and collective Jewish identities.

Additionally, this case study begins to explore the market for JOFEE within the broader Jewish community. However, given the limited availability of data at this time about JOFEE’s relationship to Jewish institutions in the catchment area of UJA-Federation of New York, this case study intends to spark a conversation about opportunities JOFEE may offer to the Jewish community overall, but is unable to make definitive conclusions about JOFEE in the broader community.

1 While the term JOFEE may not fully capture the entirety of these experiences, nor is it a universally agreed-upon term, we use the term JOFEE throughout this report for the purposes of brevity.

2 When this research began, Hazon and Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center were two independent nonprofit organizations, and Teva Learning Alliance was a program of Surprise Lake Camp. During the period of the research, Hazon and Isabella Freedman merged and Teva joined the enlarged Hazon. During the initial period of this research, the New York Ride was all run by the legacy organization Hazon. Adamah Farm Vacations, Adamah Fellowship, Jewish Greening Fellowship and ADVA network were all run by the legacy organization Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center. Teva Residential Programs and the Teva Seminar were all programs of Surprise Lake Camp.

3 This case study deliberately focuses on participants in the 11 programs funded by UJA-Federation of New York, regardless of their residence (whether within the catchment area of the UJA-Federation of New York or not), in order to learn about the work of these programs overall.

4 The ADVA Network—a combination of Adamah and Teva—provides alumni of the Teva Learning Center and Adamah Fellowship with support, direction and increased ability to find their niche as leaders in the American Jewish Community.

5 UJA-Federation of New York uses the term “gateway” to mean synagogues, camps, Hillels, JCCs and Ys which serve as entry points, or gateways, into the Jewish community.

Immersive JOFEE Programs Supported by UJA-Federation of New York Included in this Study



About The UJA-Federation of New York’s Investments in JOFEE

Since its creation in 1993, UJA-Federation of New York’s Commission on Jewish Identity and Renewal (COJIR) has focused on inspiring a passion for life and learning in the Jewish community, seeking to ensure that the next generations are engaged by a dynamic Jewish community that is both open and welcoming. COJIR advances its work through task forces, three of which support JOFEE: The Jewish Community Development Task Force (JCD),The Gen i Task Force, and Experiments in Teen Engagement (ETE). The more recent work of the JCD is grounded in findings from the 2011 Jewish Community Study of New York. The study revealed a shift away from membership institutions to a range of more nuanced forms of personal connection, and identified that younger

Jews are moving away from more traditional communal and denominational affiliation.<sup>6</sup> These findings—and their implications—have sparked further interest in strategies that build Jewish identity, inspire Jewish young adults, and strengthen Jewish communal institutions.

Having evolved over time, the impact of COJIR’s portfolio extends beyond the Metropolitan New York Jewish community. For example, COJIR’s JOFEE grantees include organizations outside New York state (e.g., Jewish Farm School in Pennsylvania, Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center in Connecticut) and serve individuals and communities outside of New York state, often drawing participants from across the nation.

COJIR Taskforces Supporting JOFEE

- **The Jewish Community Development Task Force (JCD):** The JCD is charged with supporting Jewish identity building initiatives and supporting new models of Jewish community, such as Jewish start-ups. It seeks to strengthen key gateway and established institutions of Jewish life (e.g., UJA-Federation of NY agencies, JCCs, synagogues, and Jewish day schools)
- **The Gen i and Experiments in Teen Engagement (ETE) Task Forces:** They support innovative programs that engage and inspire teens and post-college young adults. Working with a diverse array of organizations, grant-making encourages teens and young adults to experiment with, shape and deepen their individual and collective Jewish identities.

6 UJA-Federation of New York, Jewish Community Study of New York: 2011 Comprehensive Report, <http://www.ujafedny.org/jewishcommunity-study-of-new-york-2011>.



Analysis and report preparation by: **INFORMING CHANGE**

Special thanks to: **hazon**  
JEWISH INSPIRATION. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES.

UJA-Federation of New York cares for Jews everywhere and for New Yorkers of all background, connects people to their Jewish communities, and responds to crises—in New York, and in Israel, and around the world.

This case study is part of a larger report titled *Seeds of Opportunity: A National Study on Immersive Jewish Outdoor, Food, and Environmental Education*. The report was sponsored by Jim Joseph Foundation, Leichtag Foundation, The Morningstar Foundation, Rose Community Foundation, Schusterman Family Foundations, and UJA-Federation of New York.

To read the full report visit [hazon.org/jofee](http://hazon.org/jofee)  
Published March 2014.

UJA-Federation of New York has been funding JOFEE programs for approximately twenty years, however it has led a more intentional approach to a focused Jewish green agenda for over a decade. Indeed, UJA-Federation of New York was an early adaptor in innovative grant-making, inclusive of JOFEE. As a strategist, investor and leader, UJA-Federation of New York has served as a key, central body with regard to JOFEE. Since 2004, UJA-Federation of New York has provided millions in grants to JOFEE that—given the scale and the diversity of the Jewish community in New York—cut across many organizations, stakeholders and locations.

UJA-Federation of New York has also played a significant role in nurturing the development of JOFEE programs and organizations. For example, in the 1990s UJA-Federation of New York funded Yitziah, one of the first immersive JOFEE programs in the country. It has been one of the earliest funders of Teva, provided seed funding to Isabella Freedman and Hazon, and more recently, was a founding supporter of Eden Village Camp.

UJA-Federation of New York has also made a significant, targeted investment in an altogether different kind of program: the Jewish Greening Fellowship (JGF). The mission of the JGF is to generate meaningful responses to climate change, to strengthen Jewish life, and in so doing, to ultimately strengthen Jewish institutions. JGF fellows participate in intensive training that empowers them to engage their constituents in Jewish environmental education, make their operations more sustainable, and increase the energy efficiency of their facilities. This case study dedicates special attention to JGF.

While this research is focused only on immersive JOFEE programs for participants aged 18 and above, UJA-Federation

of New York supports JOFEE programs that are not limited to this time frame or age group. Some of these include:

- Sharing Our Impact: Online Jewish Garden Manual & Core Curriculum
- Outreach and workshops connecting Jewish organizations and synagogues
- Anafim: The Sustainable Food and Farming Internship, hosted at the Jewish Farm School at Eden Village Camp, and targeted to a small number of high school seniors and those doing a gap year

Who Is Involved?

Participants in the 11 immersive JOFEE programs supported by UJA-Federation of New York come from a range of backgrounds and are motivated to participate in these programs for a variety of reasons. Almost all participants (89%) had four of five key Jewish childhood experiences, slightly higher than the aggregate from the national JOFEE study. The two key motivating reasons for participating in immersive JOFEE programs are the opportunity to learn in and with a community of like-minded people *and* the opportunity to learn more about outdoor, food, or environmental issues.

Building Jewish Identity & Community

**As a result of immersive JOFEE experiences, participants are reconnecting to and feel increasingly positive feelings towards Jewish Life.** More than two-thirds (68%) of participants in immersive JOFEE programs funded by UJA-Federation of New York report having felt

“It was the first time I ever felt like I was in a Jewish community that shared my complex values. It gave me the keys to unlock my Judaism and take responsibility for it, a profound shift in the way I felt about my Jewish self.”

—JOFEE Participant

disengaged from or not connected to Judaism or Jewish life during a period of their life, most frequently citing negative Jewish experiences or simply not feeling a sense of connection to Jewish life or tradition. Almost all of these people, however, have found ways to reengage or reconnect with Jewish life and community, and about 40% attribute this specifically to their JOFEE experiences. Learning that Jewish tradition has something to say about the environment, issues related to food consumption and the ethics of modern life has increased the relevance of Jewish life for many participants. Others have expanded their “vocabulary and identity around food, Judaism,

and the environment and their interconnection.” Additionally, many report that JOFEE is a springboard for integrating Judaism into their lives in a way “that makes sense for me, in a way that I could really connect to.”

**For many, immersive JOFEE experiences contribute to an increased sense of belonging to a Jewish community.** Many, for example, reference that JOFEE experiences connected them to like-minded Jewish peers, illustrating in a deeply meaningful way that there is a Jewish community that meets them where they are at, one that they wish to be a part of. Additionally, most (80%) participants in immersive JOFEE programs funded by UJA-Federation of New York consider themselves leaders in their community as a result of their immersive JOFEE experience. This overall increase in Jewish expression suggests the potential power of JOFEE programs for building community. Participants specifically reference the robust effects of being in an intentional, pluralistic Jewish community. Hazon New York riders, for example, are drawn to the ride both out of the physical challenge and the opportunity to do the ride in a pluralistic community that reflects their inclusive values.

“[JOFEE] was a missing link for me in the Jewish world, which I had previously felt very disconnected from.”

—JOFEE Participant

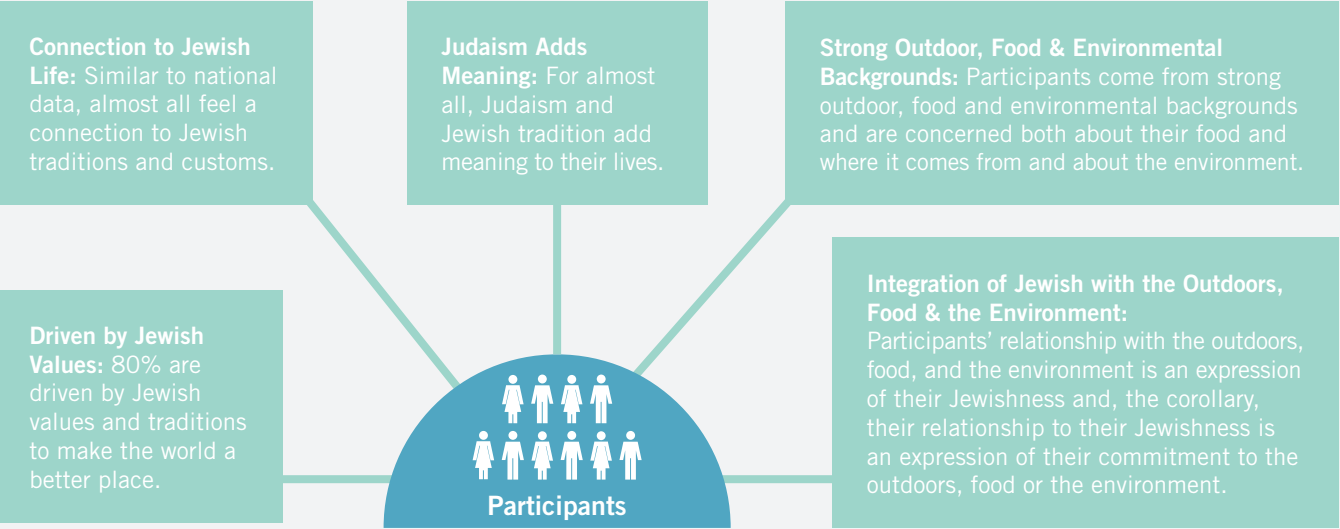
UJA-Federation of New York Models Green Practices

In addition to supporting JOFEE efforts in the community, UJA-Federation of New York has implemented a range of greening efforts within its own organization:

- A Green Committee promotes green practices throughout UJA-Federation of New York’s headquarters.
- 400+ employees are offered the opportunity to participate in a CSA (Community-Supported Agriculture<sup>7</sup>) with an upstate New York farm.
- UJA-Federation of New York has significantly reduced costs and eliminated waste by purchasing recycled office paper, distributing coffee cups made from renewable plant fiber, investing in light sensors for all common areas, installing water-saver faucets and low-flow toilets in restrooms, and implementing energy-saving policies for in-house printing.

7 A CSA is a regularly-scheduled produce pickup from a local farm, delivered to a central location.

Backgrounds of Immersive JOFEE Participants



**Primary Motivation for Participating in a JOFEE program:**  
The integration of outdoor, food, or environmental content within a Jewish context






“I now see that there are people like myself engaging in Judaism in beautiful ways, that I can take the traditions that mean something to me and make them my own. I can find community within Judaism.”

—JOFEE Participant

**For nearly all participants, JOFEE programs had a strong influence on participants’ motivation to make the world a better place, as driven by Jewish values and tradition.** And, some report feeling more empowered as a Jew, suggesting that they are feeling encouraged to experiment with and shape their Jewish identity. As one participant notes, JOFEE experiences “gave me a sense of place as a Jewish person.”

**Participants are also making some changes in their lives, work, and community.** About half have attended Jewish educational or cultural events in the past year, more than half of whom attribute this to their JOFEE experiences. About two-thirds have attended synagogue in the past year, about half of whom report that their JOFEE experience has influenced this. There is not yet strong evidence suggesting that

 JOFEE connects participants to Jewish life.

### Jewish Childhood Experiences of Participants<sup>8</sup>

- 94% considered themselves Jewish growing up
- 82% had a bar/bat mitzvah ceremony
- 60% attended an overnight Jewish camp
- 52% actively participated in a Jewish youth group or club in high school
- 29% attended a full-time Jewish day school or yeshiva

immersive JOFEE experiences are contributing to increased membership, participation, or affiliation with Jewish gateway institutions, due to the limited data available on this issue. A topic for future research is exploring the involvement and membership of JOFEE participants in gateway institutions, as well as their ongoing involvement with JOFEE efforts.

“I saw that there were a wide variety of ways to be Jewish and participate in a Jewish community.”

—JOFEE Participant

**Immersive JOFEE programs are also contributing to participants’ awareness and commitment to the outdoors, food, and environmental issues.** The intentional and explicit focus of JOFEE on integrating outdoor, food and environmental sustainability issues within a Jewish context is powerful for participants, and the majority are making some changes in these areas in their life, work and community. For some participants, JOFEE was the first time they learned about food consumption. For example, Teva participants valued learning about food issues, especially in a Jewish context; for some, this was their first exposure to the issues and, as a result, some report having made changes in their lifestyle. Others, for example, report being inspired by JOFEE to join CSAs and make changes in their eating and purchasing habits and speak as “ambassadors” for Jewish programs focusing on these themes.

**There are opportunities to improve alumni engagement.** Deep and lasting friendships, professional connections, and larger networks have come out of immersive JOFEE programs. However, JOFEE professionals believe that alumni engagement can be more strategic, and program alumni share that they would appreciate more alumni activities. For example, the members of the Hazon New York bike ride community and the ADVA network requested more in-person opportunities to reconnect, learn and take shared action. ADVA network members in particular report that the alumni network was underutilized.

### Outcomes: Beyond The Participants

In addition to providing participants with Jewish experiences that connect them to the Jewish community, data suggest that JOFEE programs are making some contributions to strengthening key gateway institutions of Jewish life and creating opportunities for collaborations between gateway and emerging institutions. There is also some evidence of growing Jewish networks, though this has been more limited.

### Outcomes From Immersive JOFEE Experiences

Participants in UJA-Federation of New York-funded immersive JOFEE programs report a positive influence on the following attitudes and behaviors:

How they personally relate to the outdoors, food and the environment	87%
Attending Jewish educational events (e.g., lectures, classes)	67%
Connecting more to their local Jewish community	66%
Attending Jewish cultural events (e.g., movies, concerts)	63%
Hosting Jewish rituals or gatherings for friends, family or peers (e.g., Sabbath dinners)	62%
Observing the Sabbath	61%
Philanthropic or charitable giving practices	56%

### As a result of their JOFEE experiences ...

- ... 4 out of 5 agree that Judaism adds meaning to their lives.
- ... nearly all feel more connected to Jewish traditions and customs.

**JOFEE is an entry-point for engaging in Jewish life.** JOFEE professionals in programs funded by UJA-Federation of New York have anecdotally observed that both JOFEE organizations and JOFEE programs in gateway institutions have attracted individuals who otherwise have not been actively participating, as adults, in Jewish communal life. JOFEE experiences facilitate deep and rich connections between Jews and provide meaningful opportunities to connect to Jewish life.

**Many would like to see JOFEE integrated into the broader Jewish communal landscape, though there are some concerns about how to best do this.** Most professionals believe that JOFEE experiences should be “normalized and integrated into schools, synagogues and campuses” as a strategy to engage Jews and provide them with meaningful Jewish experiences. There is some indication from Jewish organizations that this is of interest. However, there are concerns about how to best integrate JOFEE into Jewish institutions. Some attribute part of JOFEE’s success to being an entry-point that is often outside of Jewish gateway institutions; they believe that this is how JOFEE has been able to help people reconnect with a Jewish community.



Participants feel more connected to a Jewish community

<sup>8</sup> In comparison, 51% of the national Jewish population had a bar/bat mitzvah, 38% attended Jewish overnight camp, and 23% attended a Jewish day school or yeshiva. (Pew Research Center. Religion & Public Life Project. *A Portrait of Jewish Americans: Findings from a Pew Research Center Survey of U.S. Jews*. October 1, 2013).



“For certain crowds, [JOFEE] programs are a rite of passage for Jewish young adults. This is encouraging, a young generation of people for whom Jewish and the outdoors, food and the environment are central to their identity.”

—JOFEE Professional

While they see potential for JOFEE in gateway institutions, they do not want it to come at the expense of reaching Jews who are not part of or attracted to gateway institutions. Some professionals are concerned that institutions may shy away from addressing urgent environmental issues or more difficult issues, such as global warming, food justice and privilege.

**There are concerns about the financial sustainability of JOFEE organizations and their ability to achieve large-scale community outcomes.** This includes questions about JOFEE business models and some doubt whether JOFEE organizations can reduce dependency on philanthropy, and expand earned-income to grow the opportunities. Others would like to see JOFEE efforts more coordinated, consolidated, or merged for greater efficiency. Some question whether JOFEE could or should be its own separate field, or whether it is a practice and approach better embedded within Jewish institutions more broadly. Professionals themselves admit that there is a variation in quality across JOFEE programs, and some informants would like to focus more on what elements of JOFEE programs are connected to the greatest outcomes. While JOFEE professionals are often strong in programming few have the necessary managerial skill and training necessary to drive organizations towards sustainability and strategic growth.

**JOFEE presents a natural opportunity for Jewish gateway and start-up institutions to learn from and support each other.** Gateway institutions can learn from the innovation, energy, and creativity of JOFEE startups, while JOFEE and other Jewish start-ups can learn from the structures and systems of gateway organizations. However, there are limited data indicating the degree to which this is happening. This cross-learning should be explored further in the future, especially as JOFEE efforts become increasingly prevalent in gateway institutions.



JOFEE is an entry point for engaging in Jewish Life

“We’re getting more requests from synagogues and JCCs than we can handle.”  
—JOFEE Professional

**Program professionals in particular, and a few community leaders, report growing demand and interest in JOFEE from gateway institutions.** This includes demand for Jewish environmental educational content and educators who can bring experiential content, to synagogues, Jewish day and religious schools, and youth and family education programs. Professionals reference demand for both one-off and ongoing JOFEE programming. Some program professionals, however, fear they may not be able to meet this growing demand. Practitioners note increasing demand for expertise in gardening and integrating food sustainability with Jewish tradition, and cite increased institutional openness to changing environmental practices and policies, whether that be for their financial bottom line or to align operations with eco-conscious expectations of constituents. The scope of this demand within gateway institutions, however, is not known, and gateway institutional interest in committing resources to JOFEE has not been assessed.

**Influencing Gateway Jewish Institutions: The Jewish Greening Fellowship**  
One of COJIR’s largest JOFEE investments—over \$1.3 million over six years—has been in the unique and noteworthy Jewish Greening Fellowship (JGF). Professionals and lay leaders from Jewish organizations serve as fellows in an 18-month cohort-based leadership training program that empowers them to engage their constituents in Jewish environmental education, make their operations more sustainable, and increase the energy efficiency of their facilities. Now in its third cohort, the JGF Network consists of 70 alumni from 55 community centers, summer camps, congregations (across denominations), day schools and social service organizations.<sup>9</sup>

“The JGF program had a big impact on me both personally and professionally. It gave me a lens through which I now view many things differently.”  
—JGF Fellow

JGF alumni report that the program is building the Jewish identity of participants, supporting new ways to connect to create meaningful Jewish experiences, building Jewish community,



JOFEE inspires JGF fellows to create change



JGF fellows are driving significant improvements in their organizations

“JOFEE will be more integrated in the future. It’s becoming more of what being Jewish is about. It’s happening in JCCs and schools.”

—JOFEE Professional

sparking institutional collaborations and raising sustainability solutions among leadership at Jewish institutions, while bringing significant cost savings to their organizations. These findings are elaborated upon throughout the remainder of this section.

**JGF participants are eager to learn about outdoor, food or environmental content within a Jewish context and are highly motivated to bring positive environmental change to their institutions.** Many entered JGF with a commitment to do more than just change their institutions. As a result, the influence of the JGF program is reverberating beyond the fellows’ workplaces into their homes and other organizations. Most JGF alumni (80%) are leveraging their roles as lay leaders in congregations, members of JCCs and parents in Jewish schools to create change beyond their JGF organization. Some, for example, are helping these organizations improve their environmental practices and policies in spurring energy efficiency changes or new practices with regard to food. The JGF experience changed how 90% of alumni personally relate to the outdoors, food and environment; they reference changes at home such as installing solar panels, beginning to compost, bringing “green-team” learnings to their co-op board and integrating Jewish traditions into their environmental and food practices. Additionally, 80% report that their immersive experiences caused them to volunteer for outdoor, food, or environmental-related activities, and most JGF alumni continue to explore JOFEE even after the fellowship has come to an end.

“It’s very empowering to use sustainability and greening skills in a Jewish context.”  
—JGF Fellow

**JGF fellows are making small and big changes in their organizations, frequently in shifting organizational policies and practices, building new or expanded JOFEE learning and engagement across the**

**organization, and making food, consumption and waste-related changes.** With regard to Jewish learning and engagement, JGF organizations are offering new or expanded Jewish environmental educational programming for different audiences, from family education to youth education to senior programs. For example, during the Mid-Island Y’s participation in the JGF, the JGF awarded an alumni grant to North Shore Synagogue and Mid-Island Y for a program that brings parents and educators from both organizations to the Y preschool’s nature classroom. The nature classroom regularly hosts community groups, including a teacher training program for the Jewish Education Project.

“I did this to improve my community and the variety of programming I could offer at [my organization].”  
—JGF Fellow

Some JGF organizations are particularly focused on food and sustainability. This includes growing food onsite, offering sustainable snack programs in youth programs, hosting a Jewish CSA program, introducing a community composting program or opening a farmers market (i.e., Riverdale Y) that offers healthy, sustainable food while also building a broader community.

**As a result of shifting organizational policies and practices with regard to the environment, JGF organizations are seeing more than the creation of greening practices; they are strengthening their brands, providing value to members, and developing currency for attracting new members.** They have made energy-efficient updates (from incorporating more efficient lighting practices to building green roofs to installing solar panels), conducted energy audits, instituted community electronic recycling drives, and reduced the use of toxic cleaning products by instituting green cleaning procedures.

9 Survey data in this section are based on the 21 responses from JGF participants.



## Greening efforts offer JGF organizations value

To illustrate, Jewish Home Lifecare, a geriatric healthcare agency, is developing a green procurement policy and The Educational Alliance has started collecting kitchen grease. Some institutions are beginning to see that these changes strengthen their brands. The 14th St Y, for example, embraced stewardship as a core value, and some believe that this will provide greater satisfaction to current members and possibly attract new ones over time.

### JGF organizations are seeing a return on their investment and they are leveraging new and different sources of funding to support their greening efforts.

Two JCCs, for example, report that actions taken as a result of the greening initiative—some which seemed prohibitively costly—have resulted in cost savings greater than the outright investment of the upgrades. The Suffolk Y, which initiated a costly energy upgrade, now expects to save \$70,000 annually in energy costs.

Additionally, the JGF model is structured to leverage available public and private funds, within and beyond the Jewish community, to reduce the burden of greening costs. Organizations in the first two cohorts received a \$15,000–\$20,000 grant to support the fellow’s salary and provide matching funds for energy efficiency improvements and programming. JGF organizations have raised over \$3.3 million in grants for greening projects. Grants received by JGF organizations have come from government, foundations, businesses and individual donors and range in size from \$500 to over \$1 million. For example, one JGF organization received a capital grant from the City of New York for new windows and another one received funding

### Examples of New & Expanded JOFEE Educational Programming in J&F Organizations

- Utilizing “Food For Thought”, a source book from Hazon, in a synagogue education program
- Building nature learning spaces and outdoor classrooms in early childhood centers
- Planting an institution-wide garden
- Introducing new Jewish environmental rituals, such as blessings for planting
- Starting a garden whose food harvests are donated to shelters
- Introducing an educational program for youth summer camp curricula that is integrated with a community composting program

“I see a big change in the Jewish community since I’ve been involved...people see now that there is a Jewish angle, a Jewish connection, to the environment. It’s slow, but the tide is turning.”

—JGF Fellow

from the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority for lighting upgrades.

### As JGF organizations are greening themselves, they are also developing new relationships and collaborations.

The Central Queens Y “community green team” built new relationships with the Chinese-American community as they, together, lobbied the city for a farmers market. Another Jewish institution hosts a weekly neighborhood green fair and farmers market, which included participation from local business and residents. The JCC of Staten Island’s new solar energy system has positioned the JCC as a leader in the local business community. And more than 70 organizations are participating in the 10+ greening workshops that have been offered by the Weiner Center at UJA-Federation of New York—events that are sparking connections and new ideas on issues from green building to appropriate celebrations of Earth Day to energy efficiency projects.

“JGF helped me to integrate a Jewish message when leading activities back at my agency.”

—JGF Fellow

### JGF fellows feel the program prepares them well to make change in their institutions.

Almost all feel that the technical skill training and leadership training positioned them to effectively lead greening efforts in their organizations. They value the focus on creating organizational change and the integration of Jewish values with their greening efforts. They particularly value the cohort model and the relationship-building it facilitates. While not all are in touch regularly, they report both friendships and a larger professional network. However, some would have liked to see more of a focus on environmental social action and food justice, and others believe that additional site visits and more concrete program ideas would have better equipped them to identify changes to make in their organizations.

“Whether or not we are close, I do consider all the fellows in my cohort, as well as those who came before and after, part of my professional network.”

—JGF Fellow

## Conclusion

In sum, this research has identified two key outcomes of immersive JOFEE programs supported by UJA-Federation of New York:

- **Providing opportunities for people to connect or reconnect with Jewish life, learning and community.** As a result of their JOFEE experiences, many see Jewish tradition as increasingly relevant in their lives and see themselves as leaders in the community in some capacity. JOFEE is strongly influencing participants’ motivation to make the world a better place, as driven by Jewish values and tradition, and participants are making some changes in their lives, work and community. This is especially powerful given high percentages of participants who had felt disconnected from Jewish life and reports of participants who were otherwise not participating in Jewish communal life.
- **Strengthening Jewish gateway and other institutions.** There is evidence that by providing entry points into Jewish life, JOFEE, in turn, provides value to Jewish institutions. JOFEE efforts in gateway institutions—often offered in collaboration with JOFEE organizations and programs—are relevant and meaningful to members and potential members, thus strengthening institutions and communities. Perceived demand for JOFEE is a testament to this, whether they be in the form of a Jewish CSA, a class on food and cooking in Jewish culture, or developing Jewish rituals that integrate environmental values. The JGF shows promise as a strategy for making Jewish institutional operations more sustainable within an explicitly Jewish context. Finally, JOFEE organizations and Jewish gateway institutions have a mutual interest in JOFEE. Gateway institutions seek to offer more and better experiences to serve their constituents, and JOFEE fits this bill; meanwhile JOFEE organizations seek to expand their reach and impact by serving gateway institutions.

While this research and case study have identified many findings about JOFEE, there is still much to learn about JOFEE outcomes, opportunities and challenges. This research was not designed to measure the exact nature and amount of change on participants, to isolate individual program outcomes and identify effective programs or program components, or to assess JOFEE’s influence on gateway institutions or other Jewish organizations and communities. These are all important areas to explore in future studies. Drawing from the research, the following questions are relevant for JOFEE practitioners, funders and gateway institutions in New York to consider. Some are similar to those offered in the full JOFEE report, and others are particular to learnings from the data explored in this case study.

- **The JGF Model:** The JGF is showing itself to be a powerful model that is bringing many benefits to staff, to members, to the community at large and, of course, to the environment. How, if at all, might other communities learn from the successes of JGF, and might there be interest in adapting JGF to other cities or piloting a national cohort?
- **Collaboration:** Data show potential for mutually-beneficial collaboration between JOFEE organizations and Jewish gateway institutions. The demand for JOFEE programming from JCCs, synagogues and Jewish schools—demand that JOFEE organizations are having difficulty meeting—underscores the opportunity at hand. How can the metropolitan New York Jewish community respond to current demand and facilitate more opportunities for strengthening Jewish organizations and creating meaningful Jewish experiences through JOFEE? Additionally, what needs to be in place to ensure that these collaborations facilitate intentional learning across emerging and established Jewish organizations?
- **Young Adults:** It is likely that JOFEE is a strategy that can counter some of the challenges presented in the 2011 Jewish Community Study of New York, including a shift, particularly among young adults, away from membership institutions or from more traditional communal and denominational affiliation.<sup>10</sup> In what ways can the New York Jewish community utilize JOFEE to facilitate more opportunities for Jewish young adults to connect with Jewish life and institutions?
- **Diversity:** JOFEE is not a one-size-fits-all strategy; participants are attracted to different types and approaches of JOFEE for different reasons. This is especially the case in the New York region, which boasts many established and large JOFEE programs and organizations and a large and diverse Jewish population. What does it mean to JOFEE stakeholders and the New York Jewish community that some people could likely become more connected to Jewish gateway institutions but others may not? And, given that many JOFEE participants have had key Jewish childhood experiences, how can JOFEE programs in particular attract those with little to no prior Jewish engagement but who, potentially, might be strongly inclined to JOFEE programs?
- **Sustainability:** Finally, how can the New York Jewish community and other JOFEE stakeholders address concerns about the financial sustainability of JOFEE organizations? If there is a strategic interest in sustaining or growing JOFEE experiences for gateway institutions and other Jewish organizations, how might JOFEE professionals and their organizations receive the capacity building and training that they need? How can stakeholders identify and address efficiency issues and identify programs and components that are most effective?

10 UJA-Federation of New York.





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This report was printed on recycled paper with soy based ink in limited quantities.

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A full copy of the report with appendices and case studies is available online at [hazon.org/jofee](http://hazon.org/jofee).

For questions regarding the report, please contact [jofee@hazon.org](mailto:jofee@hazon.org).