

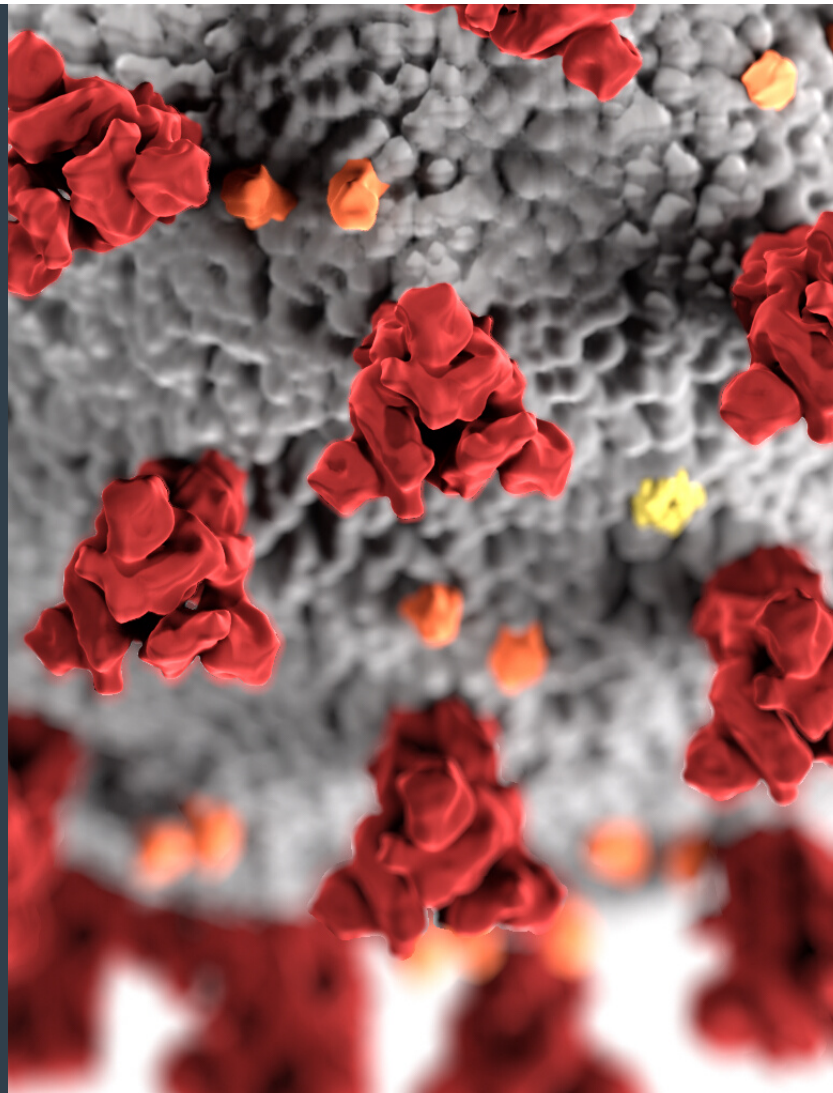
JULY 2020

COVID RESPONSE PHASE II NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Jewish Federation of St. Louis



Jewish Federation
OF ST. LOUIS



INTRODUCTION

Jewish life has been greatly affected by the pandemic. People are now engaging in Jewish community differently with many seeking support and connection from congregations or social service providers and engaging in online learning opportunities. At the same time, many are feeling the loss of what sustains their Jewish identity, like Jewish summer camp, early childhood centers, and in-person minyanim. Organizations are being challenged in ways they never could have expected to try to meet the needs of their constituents. They are faced with daunting challenges related to program decisions and fundraising all under a cloud of uncertainty and constantly changing conditions related to health and safety caused by the pandemic. While the situation presents many challenges, there are also opportunities. As we move past the crisis phase and into maintenance and recovery, Federation is looking at how to support the Jewish vibrancy of our community and the organizational infrastructure needed to support it.

Through the COVID Community Response Fund, Jewish Federation of St. Louis raised \$680,000 to address challenges we now face. Based on an initial needs assessment, the fund has supported meeting basic human needs and provided organizations with critical technology. This second needs assessment report briefly reviews human needs related to the pandemic, then looks at themes across common organization types, followed by an examination of organizational capacity issues affecting all organization types.

DATA SOURCES

Literature review finding numerous articles and research on how the pandemic has affected Jewish organizations across the country.

Stakeholder interviews with 20 organizational leaders representing a sample of congregations, social service providers, day schools, and Jewish engagement programs.

An organizational capacity survey conducted with Jewish organizations in St. Louis just prior to the pandemic. There were 73 responses from lay and professional leaders. Some data is included here and a full report is forthcoming.

A Brandeis Survey was conducted which included a sample from St. Louis examining the impact of the pandemic on Jewish households. Some data is included here and a full report is forthcoming.

HUMAN NEEDS

Jewish Federation of St. Louis has a continuing commitment to support basic needs resulting from the impact of the economic downturn on families and individuals. We likely will see additional need if more become unemployed. Also, in response to the pandemic, SNAP (food stamp) benefits were increased, individuals received stimulus checks, and unemployment payments were

increased. As those benefits potentially end this summer, we are likely to see increased needs. Federation has already invested in this area through the COVID-19 Community Response Fund to support food programs, cash assistance, and mental health services.

MENTAL HEALTH

Federation supported mental health services at JFS through the first COVID response investment. Mental health receives special attention here as it continues to be heard as a major concern and so warrants further discussion. The Brandeis study shows 18 to 34 year-olds are far more likely to report that they have emotional difficulty than older people.

"People are really down, really depressed. Some say it is a 'lost year' of their life."

~Congregational Rabbi



"We are already seeing the mental health impacts of isolation – psychosis, memory issues, dementia, weird behavior that was not happening before... not everyone has family members to help."

~Social Service Provider

Challenges



- Teens coping with isolation
- Uncertainty for college students
- Marriage counseling
- Widow/widower support
- Older adult dementia
- Adjustments to returning to the workplace
- Isolation breeding depression and anxiety
- Parents stressed by children being home
- Children adjusting to return to school

EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTERS

Ten Jewish early childhood centers (ECCs) are located in our area, including: 6 congregational schools; 2 affiliated with day schools; 2 JCC programs.

A Jewish Federation of St. Louis assessment from 2017 concluded that early childhood centers not only provide childcare, caring environments, Jewish education, and opportunities for Jewish cultural/holiday observance, they also provide families opportunities for social engagement and Jewish community connections.

ECC directors have been meeting regularly to share information and find opportunities for collaboration, convened by Federation.

ECCs are expecting to serve 95 (12%) fewer children than before the pandemic. This is for a variety of reasons related to the pandemic including following CDC guidelines, finding adequate staffing, need for more scholarship, and parents' health concerns.*

Challenges



Loss of earned income which impacts the bottom line for the parent organization

Difficult to engage the preschool age group through eLearning

Can't provide the care-giving function for the younger children virtually

Lost teaching staff through layoffs when it was already difficult to hire and maintain staff

Re-opening challenges: Smaller classrooms, no outside resource people, cohort approach, cleaning protocols

May lose more teachers because they have their own children at home

*with 8 of 10 reporting

DAY SCHOOLS

All day schools quickly pivoted to eLearning formats when stay-at-home orders were instituted in March. All are concerned about decreases in enrollment and tuition payments and are starting to see this happen. Schools across the region are anticipating a mix of in-person and eLearning being required in the 2020-21 school year.

Challenges



Training teachers on eLearning

Developing curriculum

Ensuring student learning needs are met

Maintaining staff who are high risk for COVID

Meeting the significant technology needs of both students and staff

RESOURCES

Other communities are assisting families with tuition through loans. The Free Loan program managed by JFS is available for this, but no one has yet applied for this purpose. Another national practice has been to offer interest-free loans to the schools.

Prizmah and Shalom Learning provide support to Jewish day schools and have COVID-specific resources available.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Area day schools struggled financially prior to the pandemic. Two out of nine respondents to the capacity survey (22%) reported having three or more months operating expenses in reserve compared to 66% of organizations overall. Like other organizations, they struggle in the areas of cultivating new donors and funders, having time to write grants, and creating a board leadership pipeline.



5%

Drop in enrollment expected in 20-21 school year according to Prizmah



"The challenge is that some families want to do a lot, even more than is provided, and other families want to do a little-each family wants something different."

~Day School Administrator

SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

Social service providers have not stopped providing services to the community throughout the pandemic. The way they provide the services has changed and often includes a mix of on-site and working-from-home staff. Those serving older adults are particularly challenged to meet the needs of their constituents who are high risk for COVID-19. Some programs have had to put some services on hold, including the JCC's Older Adult Day Center and NORC's Minor Home Repair and Tech Troubleshooting programs.

Crown Center and Covenant Place both have cafes that offer healthy, kosher food not only for their residents but for the community at large. These cafes also provided income for the parent organization. They closed with the onset of the pandemic and have since pivoted to serving the older adult community once again with curbside pickup, pay as you are able, options. These programs have changed to focus on serving the community without necessarily generating income.

Challenges



Protecting health and safety of workers

Increasing demand for services

Technology for working from home and remote service delivery

Off budget needs like PPE

Volunteers unable to serve

Loss of earned income generators

JFS has had to stop its Child Abuse Prevention in-school program. JFS leaders would like to use technology to deliver the program in the fall. The program is critical as new data suggests more children are at risk of abuse while home during school closures. Several attendees disclose abuse each time they present the program.


YOUTH-SERVING ORGANIZATIONS

Teenagers are perhaps more adept than any of us at functioning in an online world. So, in that respect, the transition to eLearning and online Jewish engagement was not as difficult for them. National organizations very quickly put out high-quality resources available to all teens while local youth-serving organizations also pivoted to engaging online sometimes, with new and creative offerings like the JCC's Lost Tribes eSports gaming and social hub.



50%

Fixed costs of total operating expenses for overnight camps. These are costs incurred whether there is programming or not.



*Regarding cancelled high school senior trips to Israel: "this trip is 99% guaranteed that they will look with pride at Israel and without that experience, it could impact their behavior in college and the rest of their life."
~Youth Program Administrator*

However, teenagers are also very social creatures. Continuing to stay at home is difficult for many and can lead to increased anxiety, depression, and family conflict. It is also difficult to impossible for youth-serving organizations to connect with previously unengaged youth without some face-to-face opportunities to build new relationships.

CAMPS

Research indicates that Jewish overnight camp is one of the most effective ways to instill lifelong commitment to Jewish community engagement and connection with Israel. Jewish day camps provide great benefit to children as they reach a younger age cohort than overnight camps and contribute to development of religious and cultural identity.

Overnight and most day camps have been canceled for this summer. Some programs are finding other ways to provide service through family camp and virtual camp opportunities. The impact on summer 2021 is still unknown.

CONGREGATIONS

Rabbis are working harder than ever providing pastoral care and managing their organizations resulting often in greater stress for them. Many are also concerned about the affect the pandemic will have on their membership. The value of coming together and the use of the building are seen as reasons for membership. The economic downturn and job loss might also be factors for member retention. According to the Brandeis study, 88% of synagogue members said they plan to continue their membership as before COVID. Younger ages (18-34) are less likely; with 71% saying they will continue their membership.

Congregations in the midst of or who have recently completed a

capital campaign are in a particularly tough position in terms of making decisions related to the building and fundraising.

For the Conservative and Reform movement congregations, the organization that usually brings them to a common table has only convened the group once since the pandemic began and the CEO of Federation has convened area Rabbis monthly. Through this they share information but are not planning together, collaborating, or working in task groups to address common issues. Religious school directors do meet regularly, convened by Federation, and have been conducting scenario planning and sharing ideas.

Challenges



*Holding virtual services and classes
and for Orthodox challenged by not holding services on Shabbat or holidays*

Managing technology

Developing protocol for re-opening buildings

Making decisions on how to handle high holiday services and programming

What to do about religious schools for the 2020-21 school year

JEWISH ENGAGEMENT

Jewish engagement programs make possible Federation's first core commitment to "promote a vibrant Jewish community for us here and now, and into the future, because we find Jewish life – in all of its diversity – of value as part of our lives, well lived." These programs connect people of all ages with Jewish cultural and educational experiences. Organizations providing these programs have been structurally and financially impacted like all organizations. Federation has a particular responsibility to support these efforts, because if the Jewish community doesn't support Jewish vibrancy no one else will.

Challenges



Basic human needs prioritized over Jewish engagement so not receiving as much support during the crisis

Developing new relationships

Travel to Israel suspended

Planning programs when there is so much uncertainty

JCCs have particular challenges due to being a large organization, loss of earned income, and loss of membership, which supports Jewish cultural programs. The JCC Association estimates that JCCs will incur ongoing costs of 40% of their operating budget during closure. This includes carrying costs for their closed buildings, including insurance, utilities, equipment leases, etc. As they reopen, there will be higher costs associated with providing their programs given staffing requirements for ECCs and that they will be limited to the number of members in the building while still requiring adequate staffing. Locally, the JCC expects to see about 18-20% less revenue for this year and for next. About 74% of their income is from membership and programs which have been greatly affected by the pandemic.

"It's hard to make new friends over zoom."

~Jewish engagement professional

"We will need to create new, unique ways of creating Jewish meaning."

~Jewish engagement professional

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: FINANCES

Prior to the COVID crisis, two-thirds of organizations reported having cash reserves equaling at least three months operating expenses; nearly one-fifth reported not having this. This positive financial positioning now serves our area organizations well. Organizations also reported strengths, pre-pandemic, in the areas of board oversight of financial performance, forecasting and budgeting, and maintaining appropriate financial controls.

COVID has had a major impact on budgets. Earned income has been lost for many organizations including loss of tuition and program fees and other income generating activities such as stores/shops, cafes, catering, and rental properties. At the same time, expenses related to the crisis which were not budgeted for have developed including for PPE and cleaning supplies. Reductions in costs, such as utility bills going down and not providing food for programs, do not offset the increased expenses and revenue losses.



Organizations reporting
having cash reserves
equaling at least 3 months
operating expenses

"I think that the financial impact is going to be way bigger than we have knowledge of now. We may lose money if people don't send their kids to preschool or religious school or drop their dues."

~Congregational Rabbi

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: FUNDRAISING

Prior to the pandemic, organizations struggled with many areas of fundraising.

68%

Don't have the time and skills needed to write and obtain grants

64%

Not successful in identifying and cultivating new donors/funders

42%

Don't have a diverse set of funding sources

42%

Not consistently successful in meeting fundraising targets

Data is self report from
Organizational Capacity Survey

Most organizations have reported they are less concerned about their 2020 budget than they are about the impact of the pandemic on their 2021 budget and plans. While budgets have been heavily impacted by loss of revenue as previously discussed, many have said they have not yet seen an impact in terms of fewer donors or donations.

Organizations continue to fundraise through the pandemic but are being met by new challenges related to this. In-person fundraising events planned for early in the pandemic were canceled or rescheduled to fall. Others who had some time to respond to the developing situation were able to successfully move their fundraisers to virtual formats and meet or come close to meeting their goals.

Organizations have been conscientious about not making fundraising asks at a time of economic crisis for many families, instead using the time to steward supporters by checking in on them and identifying their personal needs.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: HUMAN RESOURCES

Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans have prevented organizations from laying off staff. They expect that as these funds run out, there will be staff changes. This can potentially have a domino effect as Jewish staff are laid off, they then don't have funds to support congregation memberships, sending children to Jewish programming, etc.

Staff working from home are also care giving for their school age children. Some have had to take Emergency Family Medical Leave Act (EFMLA) which allows them to take paid or partially paid leave while taking care of their family members as allowed for in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. Programs and services which require in-person staffing, particularly schools, are concerned that staff will not be available as they need to care for their own families in the fall and beyond.

Education positions were difficult to fill prior to the pandemic. The pandemic has now greatly affected ECCs, day schools, and religious schools in terms of their ability to retain the talent that they had, which is critical since they know it will be difficult to replace them. This has motivated many organizations to do all they can to retain their teaching staff through the crisis, putting a strain on overall budgets.

66%

Provide adequate and affordable health benefits to employees*

40%

Do not have the HR resources required to meet their organization's needs*

18

Number of Jewish organizations Federation is aware of that have received PPP loans

*Data is self report from Organizational Capacity Survey

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: TECHNOLOGY

Prior to the pandemic, two-thirds of surveyed organizations said their staff had the technology they needed to do their jobs. Staff working from home coupled with a change to online programming and services created a whole new level of technology needs across all organizations. In June, Federation offered grants for organizational critical technology needs resulting from COVID-19. Applications from 29 organizations totaling more than \$160,000 were received and almost \$56,500 in support was provided. Proposals revealed a varying level of technical sophistication and preparedness across organizations.

Organizations are thinking about what programs and services they will continue to provide virtually once the pandemic is over and assessing constituents' interest for ongoing virtual options.

Some organizations are finding advantages to using technology to deliver services. One stakeholder provided this example:

One religious school divided kids into small groups of 3-4 students because it was more manageable over Zoom that way. They found that a student, who had not previously been identified, had not learned her aleph-bet. In the small group setting she was able to learn it all in two months. The school is now considering if it would be better to continue “chevrutah” learning, regardless of if classes are in-person or remote to make sure each student is achieving learning objectives.

CONCLUSION

In order to maintain a stable and diverse Jewish organizational ecosystem, Federation will consider concrete ways to address the challenges laid out in this needs assessment. This aligns directly with two of our core commitments and several priority areas set by the Board. Summarized they are:

- To expand and strengthen an engaged, vibrant, and flourishing St. Louis Jewish community
 - High Priorities: Moderately engaged; Early childhood and families with young children; Families with school-aged children
- To develop the financial and human resources, and infrastructure, needed by our community
 - High Priority: Attract and retain high quality professional staff; Promote and increase collaboration
 - Medium Priority: Strengthen organizational capacity

Never before has it been so important for Federation to step up in care and coordination with the community we serve. During past times of crisis, like during the Great Depression, Jewish organizations pulled out all the stops to help their constituents. Once again we are facing unprecedented times. While Federation does not have all the answers, nor all the resources, we can take steps together with the community to mitigate the economic hardship resulting from COVID-19. This means working to address these critical needs, and others as they emerge, through funding, technical non-financial assistance, strategy development, and coordination.

Critical needs identified in this needs assessment include:

- Unexpected 2020 costs related to the pandemic
- Re-opening congregations, schools, ECCs and other buildings safely
- The multiple challenges ECCs are facing to ensure families with young children have strong Jewish community connections
- Sustainability of our day schools
- Conducting scenario planning to help with the uncertainty created by the pandemic.
- The impact of lower expected revenue in 2021. Specific challenges related to this include:
 - a) fundraising in the time of COVID with emphasis on individual and major donors; and
 - b) planning organizational change including what programming, staffing, and “back office” look like under reduced organizational budget scenarios.

This work has been overseen by the COVID Response
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