



## The Jewish Federation of Greater Washington Request for Proposals (RFP) Seeking Initiatives to Engage and Support Young Adults

### Background

The Jewish Federation of Greater Washington (Federation) invites proposals from organizations seeking to deepen and broaden Jewish engagement among young adults (approximately ages 22–39) in the Greater Washington region. Federation is particularly focused on initiatives that move beyond standalone programs and instead build connected pathways leading to enduring engagement in a vibrant Jewish life.

Young adulthood is a period of significant transition—moving to new cities, forming social networks, and deciding independently how Jewish life fits into their lives. The choices made during this stage, and whether the community meets people where they are, often shape long-term patterns of engagement and connection.

In the past six months, Federation commissioned a landscape analysis conducted by Rosov Consulting. This study found that many young adults who remain unengaged or only intermittently engaged express a desire to be more meaningfully connected to communal Jewish life. The gap between interest and participation is the central challenge. Many young adults lack clear, relationship-based entry points and do not encounter pathways that guide them from initial participation to sustained engagement. Rosov reports that despite a robust ecosystem of programs, their impact is often limited by insufficient follow-up, coordination, and connection across organizations. Furthermore, existing offerings tend to work best for those already connected, while others struggle to find their way in.

This RFP aims to close the gap between interest and participation and build pathways toward continuous engagement in Jewish life. Federation’s previous grantmaking and other research has identified that certain types of experiences, such as immersive experiences and Jewish learning, consistently outperform others in driving sustained engagement.

To build on these findings, Federation is not seeking to add more standalone programs, but to strengthen the conditions that allow existing efforts to reach further—by improving relational entry points, designing intentional pathways, and building stronger coordination across the young adult ecosystem.

### What We Are Seeking to Fund

We welcome proposals that advance one or more of the following evidence-based engagement modalities:

1. Immersive experiences — Multi-session, cohort-based, or retreat-style programs that create significant depth of engagement and identity connection (see Appendix).
2. Jewish learning — Structured or semi-structured educational experiences connecting participants with texts, tradition, and contemporary relevance, with intentional design for relationship-building and next-step engagement (see Appendix).



Strong proposals will demonstrate: (1) a clear theory of how the program moves participants from first contact to sustained engagement; (2) intentional design for reaching young adults who are interested but not currently participating; and (3) a plan for coordination or warm handoff with other ecosystem organizations. Cross-organization collaboration is strongly encouraged and will be weighted favorably in the evaluation process.

The Application Review Committee seeks to invest in efforts that **lower barriers to entry, strengthen relational entry and pathways, and improve coordination across the young adult ecosystem**, particularly for young adults who are *interested but not currently participating*.

The Committee is particularly interested in proposals that reflect a shift **from programs to pathways**, and that address the structural barriers identified in the Rosov landscape analysis.

- Enable **clear, socially supported entry points** into Jewish life for young adults.
- Support **intentional pathways** that move participants from first touch to sustained engagement and relationship-building.
- Expand reach **beyond the already connected**, especially young adults who are new, unaffiliated, or navigating Jewish life independently.
- Strengthen **cross-organizational coordination and handoffs** that reflect how engagement actually occurs in practice.

This funding is **not intended** to support:

- One-off events without a documented plan for follow-up or next-step engagement.
- General operating support unrelated to young adult engagement.
- Programs that rely primarily on broad marketing rather than relational outreach and personal invitation.

While the awards will be made for an initial one-year period of performance, grantees with demonstrated success will have priority consideration in the following year's application cycle or may be extended.

Federation should not be the sole source of program support, and Federation's contribution should never exceed 75% of the funding for any program at any given time. Applicants may quantify in-kind contributions in the budget submission.

### **Eligibility Requirements for Applying Organizations**

By submitting an application, organizations must:

- Participate (or nominate a senior professional to participate) in Professional Development Opportunity convened by Federation
- Be a tax-exempt organization or established group affiliated with a fiscal sponsor
- Be willing to submit financial documentation
- Offer programs that are welcoming, inclusive, and reflect Jewish values
- Identify on all funded-program marketing materials (including print, digital, and other collateral) that, "This program was made possible by a grant from The Jewish Federation of Greater Washington"
- Promote programs and offerings of Federation and other grantees to your participants
- Submit Formal Mid- and End- of Grant Period Reports



## Application Review

Federation's grant review committee will use the following decision-making framework to evaluate and recommend proposals for the upcoming grant cycle:

### Proposal Evaluation Criteria:

- Programs that advance relational engagement, pathways, and/or ecosystem coordination
  - Addresses entry point barriers
  - Focuses on relational engagement
  - Plans for repeated outreach
  - Includes warm handoff to connect participants with other programs or organizations
- Feasibility of the program as designed
  - Clear description and objectives
  - Risk factors identified
  - Identified targeted audience
  - Realistic timeline, with defined milestones
  - Appropriate budget
  - Organizational capacity and staff/lay leader expertise to implement the proposed program/project
- Plan to monitor and measure outcomes
  - Clear Theory of Change identified ([What's this?](#))
  - Measurable Goals
  - Appropriate metrics
  - Evaluation methods
  - Designated tools and personnel to track results

### Alignment with Federation Mission, Vision, and Strategy:

- Cross-organization collaboration
- Potential for sustainability and scalability over multiple years
- Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging
- Geographic area

## Application Submission Process:

**Submission Deadline: Friday, July 17<sup>th</sup>**

**Application will only be accepted via Federation's online application system.**

**Please use this link: [Young Adults Application for FY27 Grant Cycle](#)**

Federation will review applications and contact potential grantees as part of its due diligence process for in-person or virtual discussions. Federation anticipates conducting due diligence reviews in late July and early August. Organizations will be notified by email of the Federation's final decision by mid-August. Approved grant period will be August 31, 2026 – July 31, 2027.

## CONTACT US

We strongly encourage applying organizations to speak with a Federation professional before completing your proposal to ensure that your intended proposal is compliant with the RFP criteria and intent. Please contact Noa Havivi at [Noa.Havivi@ShalomDC.org](mailto:Noa.Havivi@ShalomDC.org) for an individual consultation.



## Appendix: Definitions

Below are strengthened definitions with “what it *is*” and “what it *is not*” to avoid category drift and ensure measurability.

**Immersive Experiences** are programs or initiatives that deeply engage participants in Jewish life (including Jewish peoplehood and engagement with Israel), learning, and community through sustained, multi-dimensional, and relational encounters. These experiences typically go beyond discrete or one-time events by creating environments where individuals actively engage, form meaningful connections, and integrate Jewish values and practices into their lived experience. At their strongest, immersive experiences contribute to significant and measurable shifts in Jewish identity and sense of belonging.

### Key Characteristics:

- **Depth over breadth:** Extended timeframes (e.g., multi-day retreats, ongoing cohorts) rather than brief or episodic touchpoints.
- **Relational engagement:** Intentional cohort-building and opportunities for authentic connection with peers, mentors, and Jewish leaders.
- **Experiential learning:** Hands-on, participatory, and reflective activities that embody Jewish tradition and culture (including Israeli contexts) into lived practice.
- **Contextual richness:** Distinctive settings that create transformation (e.g., Shabbat immersion, service-learning, travel experiences, residential settings, immersive study programs).
- **Identity integration:** Encourages personal reflection, meaning-making, and application of Jewish values in daily life.

### What it is not:

- One-time events without follow-up
- Brief or transactional educational encounters
- Primarily lecture-based or passive programming
- Programs lacking meaningful peer or mentor relationships
- Experiences without relational or reflective components
- Travel alone (travel may be a feature, but it is not sufficient to qualify as immersive)

**Jewish Learning:** Structured or semi-structured educational experiences that meaningfully connect participants with Jewish texts, traditions, values, history, or contemporary life. Learning experiences are intentionally designed with clear content, facilitation, and outcomes, and may take place in cohort-based, drop-in, or self-directed formats. Effective Jewish learning increases knowledge, strengthens Jewish meaning-making, and creates pathways for continued engagement.

### Key Characteristics:

- **Grounded in Jewish content:** Engagement with primary or secondary sources such as historic or modern texts, history, practice, and contemporary or cultural Jewish topics
- **Intentional design:** Clear learning objectives, structured facilitation, and thoughtful curriculum or content framing
- **Active engagement:** opportunities for discussion, questioning, interpretation, and personal connection among participants are features, not byproducts
- **Relational component:** Interaction among participants and/or educators is a designed feature that supports learning and belonging



- Accessible Entry Point: Appropriate for varying levels of prior knowledge, with support or scaffolding as needed
- Clear next step: participants are offered a pathway to continued learning or community involvement

**What it is not:**

- One-time lectures, panels, or speaker events without engagement or follow-up
- Social programming with no explicit educational content
- Informational sessions about Federation or community services
- Marketing, recruitment, or promotional presentations
- Content delivery without facilitation, interaction, or opportunities for meaning-making