



The State of
American Philanthropy

Giving for
Jewish Causes

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ABOUT INSIDE PHILANTHROPY

Inside Philanthropy is a digital media site that covers the world of charitable giving. We report daily on foundations, major donors, and trends in philanthropy. Through our GrantFinder resource, we also profile and track thousands of funders working across key issue areas and geographic regions. Inside Philanthropy is supported by reader subscriptions and advertising. We do not receive funding from any other source. Learn more at insidephilanthropy.com

ABOUT THE STATE OF AMERICAN PHILANTHROPY

The State of American Philanthropy is a series of background papers on important topics and trends in U.S. philanthropy. The papers draw on past research and reporting by IP writers, as well as new interviews, grantmaking data, and other sources. Learn more at insidephilanthropy.com/state-of-american-philanthropy.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Philanthropic giving to Jewish causes and organizations encompasses a wide range of funders and issue areas, from individual donors who give annually to their local Jewish federation to large private foundations, with areas of focus including aiding community members in need, preserving Jewish identity, Jewish education, supporting religious institutions and fighting anti-Semitism. While those who give to support Jewish causes and organizations are diverse in terms of philanthropic capacity, political worldviews, and more, many are guided by the Jewish giving traditions of tzedakah (charity), tikkun olam (repairing the world), and ma'aser (tithing).

In this State of American Philanthropy issue brief, Inside Philanthropy's researchers, writers and editors have assembled an overview of philanthropic giving by U.S.-based donors to Jewish causes or to nonprofits that define themselves as Jewish in mission, cause or programmatic activity. The brief looks at the overall lay of the land, including the traditions that guide giving, who's giving, which issues or organizations are receiving the most funding, and the trends, challenges and opportunities leaders in this subset of the philanthropic sector are focusing on today.

Among the report's key findings:

- Philanthropy for Jewish causes and organizations is not monolithic or homogenous, but diverse and multifaceted.
- Jewish traditions of giving – tzedakah (charity as a moral obligation), tikkun olam (repairing the world), and ma'aser (tithing) – remain powerful motivators and guides of today's philanthropy.
- Hundreds of millions of dollars flow from U.S.-based donors to Jewish causes and organizations in the U.S., Israel, and other parts of the world annually.
- Priority issues are addressing poverty and providing a social safety net, preserving Jewish identity, Jewish education, Jewish history, fighting anti-Semitism, and supporting religious institutions and Israeli causes.
- There has been a precipitous decline in funding for Jewish arts and culture organizations in recent years.
- Jewish federations – local community foundations that are part of a national network – play a huge role in Jewish communities and philanthropy. Individually and collectively, they represent the top funders of Jewish causes and organizations in terms of dollar amounts.
- There are also a number of substantial private foundations that focus on giving to Jewish causes and organizations, as well as a few large foundations that support Jewish causes and organizations alongside giving to a host of other causes.
- Individual major donors are also making an impact, sometimes standing decidedly apart from the community-based federation model to focus on their individual visions.
- New initiatives are advancing equity and inclusion in funding institutions, nonprofits and the communities they serve.

Leaders in the field see both challenge and opportunity in generational and other shifts, including possibly diminishing commitment to federations or to Israeli causes, political polarization, innovation and creativity, and new initiatives to broaden “who’s at the table.”

Introduction

“The first question is: ‘What is Jewish giving?’” says Andrés Spokoiny, president and CEO of the Jewish Funders Network. Spokoiny—like many others in the field—knows there is no simple answer.

For the purposes of this issue brief, *Inside Philanthropy* looks specifically at charitable giving from U.S.-based donors to Jewish causes or to nonprofits that define themselves as Jewish in mission, cause or programmatic activity. This is different from looking at all charitable giving by Jewish people, which would include some of the most high-profile philanthropists of our time (Mark Zuckerberg and Michael Bloomberg, to name just two) as well as countless individuals and families who give at all levels to address a vast array of issues. Still, even narrowing the focus to philanthropy directed specifically toward Jewish causes and organizations leaves significant breadth and diversity.

Funders of Jewish issues and nonprofits are diverse in capacity and in type, including giving circles, family foundations, individual small donors and mega-donors. Jewish community foundations and federations—local, community-based Jewish charitable institutions—play an especially significant role in this area compared to other sectors of philanthropy. Some funders give both communally (through annual gifts to their local federation) and individually (through a DAF or private foundation, for example, with a specific area of focus); others prioritize one of these types of philanthropy over the other.

Those who give to Jewish causes and organizations are also diverse in terms of worldview and area of focus. Even while many share some common Jewish

values and traditions, such as tzedakah (charity as a moral obligation) and tikkun olam (the responsibility to repair the world), funders of Jewish causes, and the nonprofits they fund, span the spectrum from conservative to progressive, and focus on an array of issues and community needs. In short: giving to Jewish causes and nonprofits is not homogenous or monolithic.

Rooted in communities for whom charitable giving is understood as a religious or moral obligation, philanthropy is widespread and common among American Jews across income levels. While they don’t all give to specifically Jewish causes, *Candid* data, which focuses on foundation giving, shows annual averages of \$600 to \$700 million flowing to Jewish causes in recent tax years. The more than 100 Jewish federations across the U.S., which support local Jewish communities, collectively give billions each year. The Jewish Communal Fund alone (one of several Jewish community foundations) reports \$249.8M in grants to Jewish organizations by its DAF holders in 2020. But these numbers do not necessarily tell the full or most current story, since huge sums of money flow through sources that are not included in *Candid*’s database, notably individual donors. Complicating the picture is the fact that significant grantmaking happens through donor-advised funds housed at Jewish community foundations, and not all of these grants go to Jewish organizations, while at the same time, significant funds flow to Jewish organizations from DAFs at institutions that are not specifically Jewish, like Fidelity Charitable.

While precisely enumerating the scope of American philanthropy going to Jewish causes and organizations is difficult, it is clear that giving in this area is substantial and has been growing in recent years as individual donors give at a higher

level and as payouts from endowed funding institutions increase, thanks to gains in the stock market. The COVID-19 pandemic also prompted increased giving in 2020, which some expect to continue.

Still, leaders in Jewish philanthropy have expressed some concerns about the future of funding for Jewish causes and organizations. While areas like Jewish education and Israel remain priorities for donors large and small, some kinds of Jewish nonprofits are struggling to find support, such as organizations focused on Jewish arts and culture. And while community foundations and Jewish federations play a significant role in this area—perhaps more so than in any other sector of philanthropy—individual mega-donors are wielding increasing influence, overshadowing smaller donors, a trend seen more broadly in the charitable sector. There is also concern that the next generation of Jewish donors may not be as deeply committed to certain causes, such as supporting Israel or giving annually to their local federation.

Drawing on prior reporting by Inside Philanthropy, recent interviews with leaders in Jewish philanthropy, and data from Candid and other sources, this brief offers an overview of the state of giving to Jewish causes and organizations by U.S.-based funders, including how charitable giving is rooted in Jewish tradition, the key issues donors in this field care about, the funder types that make up the ecosystem of giving in this area, and notable funders, grantees and philanthropic initiatives.

The Lay of the Land

Traditions Guiding Giving

“[T]he way we [Jews] think about philanthropy is very specific. And it’s based on teachings from Maimonides, from the Talmud, from the Torah.”

—philanthropist Ricky Shechtel

Jewish traditions of philanthropy are rooted in three credos: tzedakah, tikkun olam, and ma’aser (tithing).

Tzedakah, which today is often loosely translated as “charity,” derives from Hebrew terms meaning “justice” or “righteous behavior.” Giving tzedakah, or charity to people in need, is understood not as an optional act of generosity, but as a moral or religious obligation. It’s a commandment (or mitzvoh) considered as important as all the other commandments, and it’s understood as something everyone is obligated to do, whether they have a little or a lot to give. “According to the Torah, it is incumbent on even the poorest person to give charity, because we’re all here to help one another,” philanthropist Ricky Shechtel told Inside Philanthropy. Rabbi Marc Baker of Combined Jewish Philanthropies describes it as “a deep sense of human responsibility to any vulnerable human being, and from a Jewish perspective, it’s essential Jewish collective responsibility.”

Though today the term is used generally for charitable giving, Jewish religious tradition established a hierarchy of giving, with the highest form of tzedakah being aiding or partnering with someone in need in a way that contributes to their eventual self-sufficiency (rather than dependence). Among the highest forms of traditional tzedakah was to enter into a business partnership or make an interest-free loan that would be paid back when the

person was able to. This led to the tradition of communal lending funds called gemach, which endures today in Jewish Free Loan associations, nonprofit organizations that make interest-free personal and business loans to people of all faiths and ethnicities.

Spotlight: Tzedakah

It is traditional to make a tzedakah contribution when someone passes away in honor of their memory. These memorial contributions are typically given to a synagogue or other institution the deceased person was involved with.

The broader concept of tzedakah as related to social welfare is realized today in the national network of American Jewish federations that draw support from and benefit the entire local Jewish community—wherever there is a need—and in the strength and breadth of Jewish philanthropy, from traditional pushkes (tzedakah boxes) to substantial family foundations and individual mega-donors committed to supporting those in need within Jewish and broader communities. Jewish tradition balances individual and collective responsibility, and the federations echo long traditions of voluntary societies to care for those in need and aim toward social justice.

Common Interests in Charitable Giving to Jewish Causes

Giving to Jewish organizations and causes includes giving to support Jewish education, the preservation of Jewish identity, and knowledge about Jewish history, as well as addressing poverty and providing a social safety net in Jewish communities, giving to synagogues, supporting Jewish community organizations, and fighting anti-Semitism. Several of these issue areas clearly overlap: Jewish education

nurtures a sense of Jewish identity, and knowledge about Jewish history deepens awareness of the threat of anti-Semitism and the importance of fighting it. So while funding data may categorize one grant as for “education” and another as dedicated to “preserving Jewish identity,” there is a lot of overlap between these areas, and the work of many nonprofits fluidly encompasses several, if not all, of these issues.

Poverty, Safety Net, and Thriving

Communities. The traditional heart of Jewish giving, or tzedakah, is giving to aid community members in need. Leaders on the front lines of donor engagement are seeing a resurgence of this kind of “classic tzedakah.” Andrés Spokoiny, the president and CEO of the Jewish Funders Network, believes this is due in large part to the “growing problem of Jewish poverty,” which funders are beginning to fully recognize. The economic impact of COVID-19—and the social-safety-net needs it revealed—has already prompted increased giving in this area. In December 2020, JFN reported that 53% of the funders they surveyed broadened their grantmaking in the first six months of the pandemic, mostly to support basic needs such as financial hardship and food insecurity.

Spotlight: Tikkun Olam

The Jewish tradition of tikkun olam (“repairing the world”) is commonly associated with social justice and the belief that people have a responsibility to fix what is wrong in the world. The nonprofit Repair the World, which engages Jewish young adults in volunteer service around education and food justice in communities across the United States, ranked among the top 50 recipients of grants for Jewish causes from 2014 to 2018, according to data from Candid.

Social services and giving to meet community needs is at the heart of the Jewish federation system.

Federations receive gifts large and small from members of a local Jewish community, and each federation then distributes funds where they are needed within that community, with the most vulnerable in mind, such as the elderly and people who are struggling financially. For instance, Combined Jewish Philanthropies (the local federation in the Boston area) established an Anti-Poverty Initiative in partnership with six local Jewish organizations several years ago to aid community members who are struggling financially, especially the socially isolated and/or elderly. Rabbi Marc Baker, CJP’s president and CEO, told Inside Philanthropy the initiative raised \$750,000 in the first three days of its initial fundraising appeal.

The federations take an expansive view of community. In describing its crisis-relief funding, for example, Jewish Federations of North America says, “We provide a lifeline for Jews and non-Jews in distress, at home, in Israel and across the globe.”

In addition to the federations, organizations like the Council for Jewish Elderly and Jewish Family and Children’s Services organizations across the country are notable recipients in this issue area.

Preserving Jewish Identity. This is a highly visible priority issue, especially among some of the leading private and family foundations and high-profile mega-donors in this sector, some of whom are concerned that younger generations might have weaker attachments to Jewish culture and identity than their parents and grandparents.

Birthright Israel, a top recipient of funding for Jewish causes (roughly around \$100 million in

contributions and grants each year in 2018 and 2019), aims to foster a connection to Jewish identity among young Jews through free trips to Israel. Birthright Israel was founded by major donors Charles Bronfman and Michael Steinhardt and received substantial funding from the late mega-donor Sheldon Adelson. RootOne, another organization that ties the preservation of Jewish identity to nurturing connections to Israel, was founded with seed money from the Marcus Foundation (the philanthropic vehicle of Home Depot co-founder Bernie Marcus and his wife, Billi).

The importance of supporting programs related to Jewish identity is related to concerns about assimilation and a decreased sense of Jewish-ness among younger generations. As Rabbi Baker of Combined Jewish Philanthropies articulates it, “Once upon a time, we just let them go. You kind of knew you’re going to lose people in their 20s, and that they would come back when they get married and have kids. They’d come back to Jewish preschools and synagogues. [So] we weren’t freaking out about it. And I think today... the world has changed so much that we feel like if we don’t actually focus on building a community that is effectively engaging young adults, we are at risk of losing an entire generation.”

Other significant recipients of funding in this area include Hillel, which nurtures Jewish communities on college campuses, and Moishe House, which creates community houses for Jewish young adults. Hillel is one of the top recipients of institutional funding for Jewish causes across issue areas, according to data from Candid, which reports Hillel received about \$80 million in grants in the years 2014 to 2018.

Hillel’s headquarters is named for the Schustermans (whose Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies has also supported Birthright Israel and Moishe House); other notable Hillel funders include the Wexner Family Foundation and William Davidson Foundation. Moishe House was also among the top 100 recipients of grants for Jewish causes from 2014 to 2018, according to data from Candid, receiving more than \$21 million in that period for its young-Jewish-adult community homes, as well as adult summer camps and weekend Jewish learning retreats.

It’s important to note that not all Jews, and not all Jewish organizations, strongly tie Jewish identity to Israel, and some don’t tie Jewish identity to Israel at all. Philanthropic giving to preserve Jewish identity prominently includes organizations like Birthright Israel, which do make this connection, but also includes giving to a diverse array of Jewish educational, cultural and community-building organizations and initiatives.

Spotlight: Tzedakah and Covid-19

Jewish nonprofits and philanthropists responded quickly to provide relief and meet community needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Jewish Funders Network reported that in the first six months of the pandemic, 53% of the funders they surveyed broadened their grantmaking, mostly to support basic needs like financial hardship and food insecurity. Eighty-six Jewish funders surveyed by JFN reported awarding a total of more than 1,600 emergency grants for pandemic-related relief in those first six months.

Jewish Education. Philanthropic giving in the area of Jewish education includes both religious and cultural education. Recipients of philanthropic giving in this area include Jewish day schools (full-time schools that provide both religious and secular education), part-time Hebrew schools (evening or weekend schools students attend in addition to their secular schools), theological seminaries and Jewish colleges and universities.

Recipients of substantial funding in this area, according to data from Candid, include the Jewish Education Project, which received \$33.4 million in grants in the years 2014 to 2018; Hebrew Union College (\$32.4 million), and Jewish schools and camps across the country.

Jewish History. Knowledge of one’s ancestors’ history is an important part of identity formation, so the teaching of Jewish history is an important

part of Jewish education and is also closely related to preserving Jewish identity. In addition, funding in the area of Jewish history supports initiatives to inform all people about Jewish history.

Funding to broaden awareness and understanding of Jewish history goes to schools as well as to organizations like the Jewish Museum in New York, whose collection reflects more than 4,000 years of Jewish history around the world, and the USC Shoah Foundation, which collects video oral histories of survivors and other witnesses of the Holocaust. Shoah was founded by Steven Spielberg, and has received substantial funding from the Koret Foundation, among others.

Fighting Anti-Semitism. This is a vital issue in Jewish communities, and philanthropists have dedicated considerable resources to this area. In the face of violent attacks against Jewish institutions and individuals in the United States in recent years, funding in this area includes funding for safety and security—philanthropic leaders in this area told *Inside Philanthropy* that security represents a significant area of increased expense for Jewish nonprofits in recent years.

But this is by no means a new area of focus—it’s one of the most enduring concerns of those who give to Jewish causes. ADL (formerly known as the Anti-Defamation League) was founded more than 100 years ago, in 1913. It received more than \$50 million in contributions in 2019, not counting funds raised through special events or endowment income. Notably, ADL’s current mission explicitly extends beyond the Jewish community, and is articulated as “to stop the defamation of the Jewish people, and to secure justice and fair treatment to all.”

Funding Network Spotlight



The Jewish Funders Network is an international network of private foundations and philanthropists whose mission is to promote meaningful giving and improve philanthropy in the Jewish world. JFN works with its more than 2,500 members from 11 countries to improve the quality and maximize the impact of their giving. JFN’s initiatives include Honeycomb (formerly the Jewish Teen Funders Network), which provides resources for young Jewish philanthropists; GrantED, which aims to strengthen relationships between grantmakers and grantseekers in the Jewish community; and JFN Israel, which serves Israeli funders both in Israel and elsewhere.

This area is a visible priority of some major donors, from Ronald Lauder to Steven Spielberg. Funding to fight anti-Semitism also intertwines with funding for education and history, such as giving to institutions like the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles, which teaches visitors about the history of the Holocaust as part of a broad aim to challenge “all forms of prejudice and discrimination in our world today.”

The Koret Foundation granted more than \$62 million to educational causes from 2013 to 2018, with a portion of that going to nonprofits that educate about the Holocaust. Koret’s \$10 million gift in 2020 to USC Shoah for Holocaust education for school-age children could be categorized as a gift in the area of Jewish education, Jewish history, or fighting anti-Semitism—a clear illustration of how these issues, which might appear distinct in grant data, intertwine and overlap in practice.

Religious Institutions. Another area of giving for Jewish causes and organizations is giving to religious institutions, which happens on a local level at all scales. A few temples, especially in areas with large Jewish communities like New York and Los Angeles, rank among the top 100 recipients of giving for Jewish causes nationally, such as L.A.’s Wilshire Boulevard Temple, which, according to data from Candid, received \$51 million in more

than 400 grants during the years 2014 to 2018, and Park Avenue Synagogue in Manhattan, which received \$34.7 million in 557 grants in that period.

Arts and Culture. Jewish-related arts and culture, which has seen a precipitous plunge in donor support, has seemingly dropped off the radar of most funders, leading to the shuttering of some well-established institutions. As just one example: The National Foundation of Jewish Culture, a U.S. organization that had been supporting Jewish artists, writers, filmmakers, musicians and scholars since 1960, ceased operations in 2015.

While Jewish arts and culture could very strongly relate to both nurturing a sense of Jewish identity and addressing anti-Semitism, outside of giving to a few high-profile institutions like the Jewish Museum in New York and The Forward, the most widely read Jewish newspaper anywhere (established in 1897), those dots don’t seem to be strongly connected by many funders currently. The Jewish Communal Fund’s 2020 reporting on giving by DAF holders showed “Culture—Jewish” ranked tenth (out of 10) among causes supported by JCF DAF holders. (“Culture—General” was eighth.)

To address the gap in funding for Jewish arts and culture, a Jewish Funders Network collaborative called CANVAS was founded in 2019 “to elevate the



“When COVID hit, we were there with our professional expertise in every community...We mobilized funding—public and private—and resources to keep the community afloat and prevent the entire communal infrastructure from collapsing during that period. You can’t create this kind of expertise in the middle of a crisis—you have to have it. [It] was so visible and obvious that even people who haven’t thought for a long time about why it’s important to have a Jewish federation active in their community and a national system of federations looked up and saw, ‘Oh, that’s why they’re there.’”

—Eric Fingerhut of Jewish Federations of North America

ecosystem of Jewish arts and culture in North America through strategic and coordinated giving, education and cross-sector exposure (between funders and artists, Jewish creatives and secular distribution networks/media, and more).” Initial grantees included Asylum Arts, a global network of Jewish artists; the Jewish Book Council; and Reboot, an R&D platform that “reimagines, reinvents and reinforces Jewish culture and traditions for wandering Jews and the world we live in.” Funding partners include the Jim Joseph Foundation, the Klarman Family Foundation, the Righteous Persons Foundation, and Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies.

One notable funder that has steadily supported arts and culture is the Wunderkinder Foundation, established by filmmaker Steven Spielberg in 1985, which has a strong focus on theater and film (as well as violence prevention, general Jewish causes, and other areas of focus).

Israel. Giving to Israeli organizations and causes remains a notable fixture of American Jewish philanthropy. “Spearheaded by prominent organizations like the Jewish National Fund and Hadassah, U.S.-based giving to Israel has amounted to billions of dollars in private aid to a once-fledgling nation,” reported John Freund in *Inside Philanthropy*. This encompasses a wide array of issues, from social services to the arts, with Zionist, social welfare and secular education organizations receiving the largest sums as of a 2012 study by Brandeis University. From 2000 to 2015, U.S. Jews moved almost \$8 billion in grant funds to Israel, according to research conducted by Hanna Shaul Bar Nissim and Matthew Brookner, in collaboration with the Institute for Law and Philanthropy at Tel Aviv University. Jewish federations donated \$2.3 billion to causes in Israel between 2000 and 2015,

and private foundations and intermediary organizations contributed \$2.2 billion in this area during the same period.

American Jewish giving to Israeli organizations is strong and continues to grow in terms of dollar amounts, but from 2000 to 2015, large grants in this area (\$500,000+) increased at a slower rate than giving to non-Jewish causes and to Jewish causes in other parts of the world, according to Bar Nissim and Brooker’s review of FoundationSearch data. The share of U.S.-based Jewish grantmaking institutions that support Israeli causes decreased from 14% to 9% during that 15-year period. In contrast, giving to Jewish causes outside Israel rose from 14% to 32%, Bar Nissim reported.

This may relate to political as well as generational divergences. The government of Israel has become increasingly conservative politically, while many (though not all) American Jews identify as politically liberal or progressive. At the same time, younger American Jews don’t always have the same connection to Israel as older generations, and some are less inclined to fund causes and organizations in Israel than they are to fund causes—both Jewish causes and others—in the U.S. or other parts of the world.

At the same time, much more funding in Israel is coming from Israelis than during the nation’s early years. “Israeli philanthropy is coming of age,” said Spokoyny.

In another illustration of how funding can’t be neatly categorized by issue, only one-third of the grants made by U.S.-based Jewish funding institutions for Israeli causes from 2000 to 2015 went directly to Israel-based organizations, according to Bar Nissim and Brooker’s research. The

other two-thirds of those grants went to U.S.-based organizations, including Jewish federations, institutes of higher education, organizations providing healthcare services, and others, which reallocated money into Israel.

In a clear example that Jewish giving is not monolithic, current and recent events in Israel and political and generational differences among American Jews have resulted in a situation in which there are now more American Jewish donors who are disengaged with giving to Israel and American Jewish donors who are ever more strongly committed to supporting Israel philanthropically. Even as American Jewish giving to Israel shifts and evolves, it remains a priority for many funders of all types and capacities.

Who's Giving: A Closer Look at Funder Types

Funders of Jewish causes and organizations range from modest to mega, and include all types of individual and institutional donors. What makes this sector of philanthropy unique is the significant role of community foundations and Jewish federations—a national network of local organizations focused on collective giving to support Jewish communities. These community funders represent billions of dollars of giving annually, making giving to Jewish causes one of the few areas of philanthropy where community funders, as distinct from individual funders and private foundations, play such a substantial role.

While community foundations are certainly influential in other areas of philanthropy (e.g., LGBTQ community foundations led the way in funding AIDS research, and geographically based community foundations are especially well-

20 Funders to Know: Jewish Causes¹

Adelson Family Foundation

Associated Jewish Charities of Baltimore

Associated Jewish Community Federation of Boston

Chaim Yehoshua Yosef Charitable Foundation

Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston

Fidelity Investments Charitable Gift Fund

Audrey Irmas Foundation for Social Justice

Jewish Federation of Cleveland

Jewish Federation of Metro Chicago

Jewish Federation of Metro Detroit

Jewish Communal Fund

Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties

Kars 4 Kids, Inc.

Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies

Schwab Charitable

Shimon ben Joseph Foundation

United Jewish Appeal-Federation of Jewish Philanthropies

Vanguard Charitable Endowment Program

Wexner Family Charitable Fund

William Davidson Foundation

Source: Candid

equipped to coordinate rapid response to disasters), there are few other philanthropic sectors where community funding institutions play such a big role compared to private foundations and major donors in terms of dollar amounts given as is the case with Jewish community foundations and federations.

Jewish Federations and Community

Foundations. Jewish federations are secular nonprofits that provide services and support to Jewish communities locally and globally. Independent federations rooted in communities across the United States are linked together by a national network. Jewish federations' model of "federated giving" (raising funds from community members via a fundraising campaign and then distributing funds to nonprofits and people in need across the community) inspired the early-20th-century American charitable movement of

Community Chests, which evolved into what we know today as the United Way. Originally organized around an annual appeal, Jewish federations receive donations large and small from members of the community, and then use those funds to meet needs across the local Jewish community—from education to social services—while also providing humanitarian relief and strengthening Jewish communities around the world through grantmaking and, in some cases, the provision of direct services. There are 146 federations and more than 300 smaller communities within the national network Jewish Federations of North America, which collectively raise and distribute more than \$3 billion annually—putting the national federation movement among the top 10 charities in the world.

Jewish federations are guided by the Jewish values of tzedakah (charity and social justice) and tikkun olam (repairing the world), and their purpose is to nurture and sustain Jewish communities. "It's the principal vehicle for collective action to build strong, flourishing communities," said Eric D. Fingerhut, president and CEO of Jewish Federations of North America. "We think of our communities as a whole and care to make sure each of our communities is healthy, safe, caring in terms of those in need, and welcoming and inclusive of the diversity in our community."

Rabbi Marc Baker, the president and CEO of Combined Jewish Philanthropies (the federation of Greater Boston), says that in addition to philanthropy, federations are "also in some ways the central platform for engagement and volunteering in the community as well. The Jewish federation had historically been, in some ways, kind of like the civic center of Jewish life."

Funder Spotlight



The Collective, established by the Jewish Women's Foundation of New York, invests in social entrepreneurs and nonprofit leaders, and is now the primary focus of JWFNY's work. In 2012, JWFNY shifted some of its focus by creating a giving circle called "Women of Strength," which funded projects benefiting women in the developing world. In 2017, after three rounds of global giving, JWFNY decided to shift its focus once again, toward its new emphasis on Jewish women social entrepreneurs. From there, The Collective was born—a recognition of the power of strengthening the capacity of Jewish, female, nonprofit leadership in order to create impact.

Each local federation assesses the needs in their community and raises funds from the community to support those needs, which often includes aid for the elderly, health programs, and education, such as Jewish day schools and youth programs. At the same time, the federations collectively support Jewish communities everywhere, including support for Israel and for immigrants and Holocaust survivors around the world.

Beyond their community and cultural specificity, Jewish federations operate much like other community foundations—receiving donations from many donors and making grants across issue areas to support a thriving community. In many communities, federations overlap or partner with Jewish community foundations. For instance, in some communities, donor-advised funds are housed at the local federation, while in others, a separate, but often complementary, Jewish community foundation has been established to host DAFs.

Donor-Advised Funds. DAFs play a large role in giving to Jewish causes and organizations. Two prominent examples: The New York-based Jewish Communal Fund manages more than \$2 billion in charitable assets for 4,200 funds. The Jewish Community Foundation of Los Angeles manages more than \$1.4 billion in assets in DAFs for more than 1,400 families, making it among the 10 largest foundations in L.A.

Of course, not all grants from DAFs housed in Jewish community foundations go to Jewish causes and organizations, as account holders support a wide array of causes within and beyond Jewish communities. For example, the Jewish Community Foundation of Los Angeles reported that in 2019, 44% of DAF giving went to the U.S. Jewish community (locally and nationally), another 25%

went to Israel, and 31% went to non-specifically Jewish causes (“the community at large”).

10 Private U.S.-based Foundations to Know: Jewish Causes²

Jim Joseph Foundation

Adelson Family Foundation

William Davidson Foundation

Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies

Wexner Family Charitable Fund

Chaim Yehoshua Yosef Charitable Foundation

Audrey Irmas Foundation for Social Justice

Marcus Foundation

Gerson Bakar Foundation

Crown Family Foundation

Source: Candid

At the same time, data from Candid shows that a significant amount of funding to Jewish causes and organizations is coming from DAFs held at institutions that are not specifically Jewish, such as Fidelity Charitable, Vanguard Charitable and Schwab Charitable, all of which ranked among the top 20 funders of Jewish causes and organizations between 2014 and 2018, according to data from Candid. More than 41,000 grants totaling more than \$210 million moved to Jewish causes through Fidelity Charitable alone during this period. DAF giving in this area is growing significantly (as it is across philanthropy). The Jewish Communal Fund reported a 30% increase from 2019 to 2020 in DAF funds sent to Jewish charities. Candid data shows increases in giving to Jewish causes from DAFs held at Fidelity Charitable every year since 2015.

Private and Family Foundations. While Jewish federations address a local community’s needs in a broad sense, distributing funds across issues like social services and education, private and family foundations often have a national reach and more specific issues where they want to make an impact.

Leading private and family foundations in terms of dollar amounts given in this area include the Shimon Ben Joseph Foundation, aka Jim Joseph Foundation, which describes itself as “devoted exclusively to supporting Jewish education of youth and young adults in the United States.” According to data from Candid, it gave \$94.3 million in grants to Jewish causes in the years 2014 to 2018.

The Adelson Family Foundation (founded by Sheldon Adelson and his wife Miriam), which states its “primary purpose ... is to strengthen the state of Israel and the Jewish People,” gave \$61.4 million to Jewish causes in that span.

Funder Spotlight



ADELSON FAMILY FOUNDATION

Founded by the late Las Vegas Sands CEO and Chairman Sheldon Adelson and his wife, Miriam, the Adelson Family Foundation focuses on Jewish causes around the world, taking a decidedly pro-Israel stance. Funding areas include Israel advocacy and defense, Israel studies, and Holocaust and anti-Semitism awareness. The Adelsons founded the Dr. Miriam and Sheldon G. Adelson Educational Campus in Las Vegas, “the only school in Nevada built on the Jewish ethos of community, service, innovation and discourse”; and other educational and youth-focused organizations.

The William Davidson Foundation, which made grants totaling \$57.9 million for Jewish causes in those years, is dedicated to advancing the economic, cultural and civic vitality of Southeast Michigan, the state of Israel, and the Jewish community. Another top foundation funder is Schusterman Family Philanthropies, which has seven grantmaking portfolios, one of which is “Jewish communities,” focusing on “strengthening the future of the Jewish community by empowering young people to connect with inclusive Jewish values, deepen their understanding of Israel, and contribute to a better world.” Founder Lynn Schusterman is a signatory of the Giving Pledge, and has given large sums to Birthright Israel and Brandeis University.

The Wexner Foundation, founded by the billionaire founder of L Brands, Leslie Wexner, and his wife, Abigail, is specifically focused on strengthening Jewish leadership in North America and Israel.

In addition to these and many other foundations, a few large legacy foundations have portfolios dedicated to Jewish giving. The Nathan Cummings Foundation, for example, describes itself as “rooted in the Jewish tradition of social justice” with a broad mission “to create a more just, vibrant, sustainable and democratic society.” It funds Jewish-focused organizations like Bend the Arc and the Jews of Color Initiative, alongside community-based social justice organizations and environmental and climate justice organizations. It also maintains dedicated funding in partnership with the New Israel Fund to “support civil society leaders working to transform Israeli society to create a just, vibrant and secure future for all Israelis and Palestinians.”

Some in the field reflect that ideally, private and family foundations with their specific priorities complement the federations with their broad missions to serve an entire local Jewish community, each playing an important role in the ecosystem of supporting thriving Jewish organizations and communities.

Major Donors. At the other end of the spectrum from community-based Jewish federations are individual mega-donors who have an outsized ability to express their individual worldviews and fund accordingly.

The classic Jewish model of giving, *tzedakah*, follows what Rabbi Baker describes as “There is a need. You want to meet it.” But this throughline presents a relatively passive relationship with a donation. By contrast, a growing number of donors now are seeking ways to be actively engaged with and by their philanthropy. Within the Jewish landscape, Rabbi Baker describes this as “changing mental models of thinking about Jewish identity and Jewish community.”

“When you are one of 17,000 donors of the federation, it’s one thing; but when you are a single funder who puts \$40 million into a project, you don’t dilute your influence with other thousands of people. That’s more and more what is happening in the Jewish community... there is a small group of people that are becoming extremely influential,” says Andrés Spokoiny from the Jewish Funders Network.

For instance, billionaire Ron Lauder announced he would spend \$25 million to fight anti-Semitism in the U.S. through a new nonprofit and super PAC. And the huge role of Birthright Israel, founded by major donors Charles Bronfman and Michael

Steinhardt and substantially funded by Sheldon Adelson, is another example of the huge influence of individual mega-donors across an entire field.

Major Donor Spotlight: Seth and Beth Klarman

Seth and Beth Klarman give through The Klarman Family Foundation, a focus area of which is “Global Jewish Community and Israel.” Grants aim to support a vibrant Jewish community in Greater Boston and to support Israel as “essential to the Jewish experience and even to Jewish survival... [in] an environment of growing anti-Semitism.” In 2019, the foundation gave \$11.8 million to organizations providing “services and opportunities that help make communities stronger, healthier and more vibrant,” with a focus on Greater Boston and the Jewish community. Alongside specifically Jewish causes, the foundation’s priorities include medical and scientific research and ensuring a healthy democracy. The Klarmans have signed the Giving Pledge.

Giving Circles. After women’s giving circles, Jewish giving circles were the second-most-common type of identity-based giving circle in the United States in 2016, according to a survey conducted by the Collective Giving Research Group. The study also found that of 188 surveyed giving circles organized based on religious identity, 88 were Jewish. The number of Jewish giving circles has likely grown since that survey; the organization Amplifier, which was founded in 2014 to start and support giving circles inspired by Jewish values, reports having helped launch 120 new Jewish giving circles, and 181 giving circles with over 4,500 members have participated in Amplifier’s network. Amplifier reports that in 2016 alone, the

giving circles in the network allocated \$6.4 million in funding. In late 2020, Amplifier became a part of Jewish Federations of North America.

Corporate philanthropy. In general, corporate philanthropy does not play a large role in giving to support Jewish causes and organizations, especially compared to other funder types. The prominent corporate funders give mostly toward media and film, focused on raising awareness about Jewish history and culture. Comcast is a significant supporter of the USC Shoah Institute, including a multi-year programming partnership across several Comcast platforms. Bank of America and HBO are among the supporters of the Museum of Tolerance and the Jewish Museum.

Who's Getting: A Few High-Profile Examples

The top recipients of funding for Jewish causes and organizations are the Jewish federations and community foundations, which at once reflects the deep and broad roots of the tzedakah tradition—a moral obligation for everyone to aid those in need in their community—and the large amount of money going into DAFs at Jewish community foundations.

After the billions of dollars that flow to Jewish federations to support local communities' needs in the broadest sense, and to DAFs to be granted as donors recommend across issue areas, the top recipients of grants in this area of philanthropy are organizations focused on nurturing Jewish identity and community among the younger generation, Jewish education, synagogues and Israel. They include Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life, Oorah (which focuses on connecting Jewish children and families to their heritage), the Wilshire

Boulevard Temple, the Park Avenue Synagogue, the Jewish Theological Seminary, Hebrew Union College, and the Israeli American Council, according to data from Candid covering the years 2014 through 2018.

| 10 Grantees to Watch: Jewish Causes ² |
|--|
| Jewish Federations of North America |
| UJA Federation of New York |
| Oorah, Inc. |
| Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life |
| Jewish Communal Fund |
| Wilshire Boulevard Temple |
| Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, Inc. |
| Congregation Ahavas Tzokah Vchessed |
| Jewish Child and Family Services |
| M Y Keren Hashluchim, Inc. |

Source: Candid

Funding for organizations focused on fighting anti-Semitism is a bit harder to track in aggregate, as these organizations are sometimes categorized by Candid not as Jewish organizations but as anti-discrimination or human rights organizations. For instance, Candid ranks the American Jewish Committee, which is active both in fighting anti-Semitism and in support for Israel, among top recipients of funding for Jewish causes, receiving more than \$33 million in grant funds in the years 2014 to 2018. However, the ADL—which has been fighting anti-Semitism in the United States for

more than a century, and which received almost \$70 million in charitable contributions and grants in 2018 alone—does not show up in Candid data under top recipients of funding for Jewish causes; rather, it is categorized under anti-discrimination/human rights, which reflects its mission to stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment for all people. Other organizations focused on fighting anti-Semitism may be similarly categorized, making it hard to track the scope of giving in this issue area.

Some of these organizations have concentrated funding bases. Oorah, for instance, is funded almost entirely by the car-donation organization Kars4Kids. Of the approximately \$80 million that went to Hillel in the period 2014 to 2018, \$49 million came from the Wexner Family Foundation and \$8.4 million from the William Davidson Foundation. In some instances, even when the funding is coming largely from a few private or family foundations, it's going toward community in a broad sense—in the case of Hillel, a national network of local communities of Jewish young adults.

Spotlight: Multiples of 18

It's common for Jewish people to give wedding and bar mitzvah gifts—and charitable contributions—in multiples of \$18. In Jewish culture, 18 is a special number because it corresponds with the Hebrew word *chai* (life). “When giving charity, the number 18 ... expresses our prayer that the merit of the charity given stand in our good stead, that we be blessed with life and prosperity,” explains Chabad.org.

Traditions Evolve: Trends & Opportunities

The year 2020 saw increased giving to Jewish communities and organizations to provide relief amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Increased amounts of money are also moving to fight anti-Semitism in the face of attacks and rising threats in the last several years. Giving from DAFs to Jewish causes and organizations also seems to be increasing year after year. All of this is good news for nonprofits in this sector. But there are also areas of concern and trends that complicate the picture.

Generational Shifts. Leaders in Jewish philanthropy spoke of challenges and opportunities related to generational change. Younger people may not have as strong a sense of Jewish identity or as much loyalty to annual giving to their local Jewish federation or giving specifically to Jewish causes, or to Israel. While cautioning against making caricatures or overly simplistic generalizations, several leaders spoke with described a broad-stroke generational divide where younger Jewish donors tend to be more “universalist” than their predecessors in their approach to philanthropy, giving as significantly to non-Jewish organizations as they do to Jewish causes.

Still, in generational shifts, some see as much opportunity as challenge. “I see a lot of innovation ... a lot of things happening that are really positive,” said JCF LA’s Dan Rothblatt. He pointed to the nurturing of dynamic communities of Jewish young adults through Moishe House, for example, as well as to initiatives that are bringing “to the communal table” issues of concern to Jews with disabilities, Jews of Color, LGBTQ Jews and others. The Jews of Color Initiative and the Ruderman Foundation’s work around disability are just two of

the examples of groups he cited that are “changing the dialogue.” He said, “I see a lot of creativity in the Jewish world where new ideas are welcome – there is an openness.”

It will happen in multiple ways, but it’s likely that generational change will significantly alter the landscape of giving in this area, especially as a large, intergenerational transfer of wealth is on the horizon. Jewish federations, community foundations and nonprofits are all prioritizing this issue, as seen in the proliferation of nonprofit programs and philanthropic initiatives aimed at the next generation, including Birthright Israel, Honeycomb (formerly the Jewish Teen Funders Network) and the Jewish Future Pledge, “a worldwide movement working to ensure that vibrant Jewish life continues for generations to come... It calls on all Jews to pledge that half or more of the charitable giving in their will/estate plan will support the Jewish people and or the state of Israel.” And it is framed in the tzedakah tradition: “The pledge is not a fundraiser. It is a moral obligation.” It has been signed by major funders including Bernie Marcus and Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies, among many others.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. Jewish people and communities are diverse in every way – in terms of race, socioeconomic status, political views, ways of practicing Judaism... and this plays out in philanthropy, as well. While some of the large, private foundations and individual mega-donors giving to Jewish organizations tend toward the conservative, more progressive funders are embracing calls for diversity, equity and inclusion in philanthropy.

The Jews of Color Initiative hosts the first U.S. philanthropic and capacity-building fund dedicated to supporting Jews of color (JoC). Based in Berkeley, California, the initiative focuses on grantmaking, research, community education and nurturing a thriving ecosystem of organizations and efforts focused on Jews of color, who several studies say represent at least 12 to 15% of the American Jewish population. Recent grants went to the Black Jewish Liberation Collective, Hillel International to support recruitment and mentorship focused on JoC professionals and college students, the Queer Mikveh Project, and OneTable (to engage a JoC consultant for a Shabbat dinner and training series for Jews of Color), among many others. The initiative is supported by some of the leading donors in this sector, including Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies, the Jim Joseph Foundation, the Nathan Cummings Foundation, the Jewish Community Federation and Endowment Fund, and the Righteous Persons Foundation.

The latter is an example of a social-justice-minded funder in this space. Established by filmmaker

Steven Spielberg and his wife, Kate Capshaw, and funded by a portion of his profits from the film “Schindler’s List,” the Righteous Persons Foundation aims “to build and support a meaningful and relevant Jewish community.” It has been supported by additional profits from subsequent films, and has made more than \$100 million in grants to organizations including T’ruah, a network of rabbis and cantors using their voices for human rights and social change; the Safety Respect Equity Network, which works to create Jewish workplaces and communal spaces free of sexual harassment, sexism and gender discrimination; and The Blue Card, which provides cash assistance to Holocaust survivors in need; among many other organizations.

Articulating the Need for General Operating and Capacity-Building Support. While general operating support is increasingly understood as a philanthropic best practice, especially in the more social-justice-oriented sectors of philanthropy, some in the field say Jewish organizations are still struggling to convince donors of the need to support overhead and general operations. One senior fundraising executive at one of the largest regional Jewish foundations told IP that many donors simply do not understand overhead and don’t think of it in the context of an organization’s overall impact. Spokoiny of the Jewish Funders Network agrees. He urges organizations to have open and frank conversations with donors to discuss what overhead encompasses and why it is essential. He also refers to a funder shift away from inherited loyalty to organizations and toward a growing focus on impact, and urges nonprofits to think about operational costs in those terms, as well—and then to communicate that impact clearly to funders.



Initiative Spotlight

Jews of Color Initiative

The Jews of Color Initiative focuses its efforts on grantmaking, research and field building, and community education. A number of funders support this national initiative including the Rodan Family Foundation, the Walter & Elise Haas Fund and the Lippman Kanfer Foundation for the Living Torah. Recent grantees include Tisch PDX, LUNAR: The Jewish-Asian film Project, Union for Reform in Judaism, and Contra Costa Midrasha.

In this regard—and in relation to discussions around diversity in Jewish communities and Jewish philanthropy—a recent \$20 million grant to the Shalom Hartman Institute of North America by the Koret Foundation and the Jim Joseph Foundation, to support and expand SHINA’s staff and overall capacity, is notable. The grant is intended to allow SHINA to shape conversations about Jewish pluralism, Jewish peoplehood, and the American Jewish future and its relationship to Israel. SHINA is spending a significant part of the grant on staffing. With the first check cut to them over the five-year period, they added a senior vice president, a director of content and communications, and development executives on both coasts, as well as scholars for SHINA’s think tank and educational programs. In addition to direct personnel costs, the grant money is being used on professional development and training. SHINA plans to build out a unique model, encompassing work as both a think tank and a creator of educational materials. The operational and capacity-building grant is a strong recognition of how creating impact—which more and more funders explicitly desire—is related to an organization’s capacity.

Increasing Influence of the Individual. In addition to how much they will continue to give to specifically Jewish organizations, a key question is whether younger donors will drift away from collective giving to the entire community through federations and instead seek impact specifically on issues they personally find most important through individualized giving, including via DAFs and private foundations.

“We hope major donors understand the importance of the broad federation mission and the annual campaign and that they give generously to that broad mission and annual campaign,” reflected Fingerhut of the Jewish Federations of North America. Fingerhut thinks the pandemic clarified for many people the continued importance of the federation model: Drawing on their deep and broad expertise in local communities, federations quickly “mobilized resources to keep the entire community afloat during that period.” He reflected on the significance of this in terms of the community’s understanding of the role of federations: “It was so visible and obvious that even people who haven’t

Funder Spotlight



Filmmaker Steven Spielberg and his wife, Kate Capshaw, established the Righteous Persons Foundation with Spielberg’s portion of the profits from the film *Schindler’s List*, “to build and support a meaningful and relevant Jewish community.” The foundation is still

supported by profits from subsequent films, and has made more than \$100 million in grants to organizations including T’ruah, the Safety Respect Equity Network, and The Blue Card. In 1994, Spielberg established what is now the USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education with the mission to record and preserve video interviews with survivors and witnesses of the Holocaust. In 1985, Spielberg founded the Wunckerkinder Foundation, which focuses on the arts, education, the environment, health and social services, including violence prevention, and Jewish causes.

thought for a long time about why it's important to have a Jewish federation active in their community and a national system of federations looked up and saw, 'Oh, that's why they're there.'"

Still, a focus on individual impact is happening throughout philanthropy, and this area is unlikely to be an exception—though the strong tradition of giving to Jewish federations could mean more of a balance in this sector between giving for collective and for individual impact.

The trend toward outsize influence on a sector by individual major donors with their own agendas is not just generational, it's also economic (a reflection of the increasing concentration of wealth among fewer people), and it is much bigger than Jewish giving—it's happening across philanthropy. But it may have unique repercussions for different communities and issues. Spokoyny of the Jewish Funders Network reflected, "[W]ealth concentration and philanthropic concentration is going to force a sort of reckoning around issues of calling on democracy and community governance... people are going to start asking the question: So who decides?"

The billionaire donor Ron Lauder offered one answer to that question when he said, "It's my money and what I stand for" when announcing he would spend \$25 million through a super PAC and nonprofit for an initiative to end anti-Semitism in the United States—an initiative that "[he] cast . . . as more aggressive than other advocacy groups," reported the New York Times. Lila Corwin Berman, director of the Feinstein Center for American Jewish History at Temple University and a co-founder of the Jewish Philanthropy Research Initiative, argued in an op-ed in the Washington Post that this move by self-described "lifelong

Republican" Lauder was an "overtly political play" and that Lauder has an "avowedly political understanding of anti-Semitism and Israel."

Political Polarization. Leaders of community foundations and federations, who interact with donors across the political spectrum, flagged increasing political polarization among funders of Jewish causes and organizations as another significant concern. While some funders and nonprofits continue to maintain an "umbrella" approach that embraces Jewish communities in all their diversity—including political and ideological diversity—some in the field told Inside Philanthropy that they see the political polarization in the larger society affecting Jewish organizations, with funders backing away from organizations they perceive as overly conservative or progressive, or due to other political or ideological differences.

This all points back to the simple truth that Jewish people and Jewish organizations are diverse, and this shapes the field of philanthropy for Jewish causes. Some funders and nonprofits uplift shared values across differences and aim for a big-tent approach, and others are sharply divided by political, ideological, strategic, generational and other differences. As is the case for many communities and for many sectors of philanthropy, giving for Jewish causes and organizations is complex and multifaceted, and will continue to evolve.

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Natella Royzman, Vice President of Charitable Gift Planning, Jewish Community Foundation of Los Angeles

Andrés Spokoiny, President and CEO, Jewish Funders Network

Steve Weitzman, Jewish Philanthropy Research Initiative

¹Based on available U.S. based institutional grantmaker data from Candid from 2014 to 2018. Excludes federal funding and funding by higher education institutions.

²Based on available U.S. based grant recipient data from Candid from 2014 to 2018. Excludes government organizations and higher education institutions.

Feedback?

The State of American Philanthropy is an ongoing project, each SAP brief will be updated periodically to integrate new information, additional data and evolving perspectives. If you have comments or information you'd like to share with us, please email us at managingeditor@insidephilanthropy.org.