“One Candle Lighting Another”
The Mentoring/Professional Exchange Project
of the
World Confederation of Jewish Community Centers
and the
American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee

A Manual

Written by Dr. Judith Veinstein
in collaboration with Smadar Bar-Akiva

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Dear Friends,

Throughout the world, JCCs are dedicated to creating educational, cultural, and recreational activities that reinforce Jewish continuity. The World Confederation of Jewish Community Centers (WCJCC) is committed to encouraging the development of JCCs worldwide in an effort to strengthen Jewish identification. From Buenos Aires to Paris, from Sofia to Tel Aviv, from Moscow to Toronto, the WCJCC aims to take the best of what each region has to offer and use it to address the specific needs of other JCCs. In doing so, WCJCC supports community building and the bond to global Jewry is strengthened.

This manual presents the fruits of a unique project that we hope will be emulated in many JCCs around the world. We believe that through the long-term commitment and personal involvement of talented Jews from different communities, the sense of Jewish Peoplehood, Klal Israel, will become a daily reality and Jewish communities throughout the world will blossom.

We would like to thank the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee for their true partnership and support— you have been our guiding light! Sincere thanks to all project participants and staff members who devoted their talents to help shape the project.

We indeed hope that the candles that have been successfully lit will light many more across the Jewish world.

Sincerely,

Steven Schwager
Chief Executive Officer, JDC
I. The Role of Emerging JCCs by Asher Ostrin, Director, JDC FSU Department

Over the last several decades JCCs in the Former Soviet Union (FSU) and Eastern Europe have begun to bloom and flourish as governments have become more permissive and welcoming to such institutions, and as their Jewish citizens developed a thirst for knowledge about their history, ethnic and religious backgrounds. JCCs serve the Jewish community by providing opportunities to connect to Jewish life through a variety of experiences: education, culture, music, art, language, sports, recreation, and social. JCCs also play an important role in helping Jews in need, especially elderly Holocaust survivors. The JCC is uniquely able to bring together all of the Jews in a community and provide them with a plethora of Jewish opportunities all under one roof.

As such, the role of emerging JCCs has six distinct components:

A. JCCs are “the address” of the Jewish community.

In many communities, the JCC functions as a miniature Jewish community. The JCC serves all of its Jewish constituents, regardless of age or denomination, and provides services in the areas of education, arts and culture, recreation, health and fitness, camping and opportunities for volunteerism. The JCC is an example of community modeling at its best.

B. JCCs are a vehicle for strengthening Jewish identity.

JCCs provide the community with opportunities to learn about Jewish life through educational offerings, cultural programs, sports and recreation, social gatherings, and celebrations of the Jewish and Israeli holidays.

C. JCCs are training grounds for community professionals.

Talented and ambitious individuals who want to work in Jewish communal life have ample opportunities to both impart and gain Jewish knowledge while working at the JCC. JCC Executive Directors’ main task is to respond to the local Jewish community’s needs and he or she must cultivate a staff that knows how to identify those needs, develop appropriate responses to them, build coalitions, develop marketing techniques, and, of course, impart quality Jewish learning.

D. JCCs can change the ways Jews think about their community.

For developing and growing Jewish communities which are heavily dependent on foreign aid, the JCC is the place where constituents can be introduced to the notion that the services the JCC provides to the Jewish community are important enough to buy. Thus, the introduction of membership rates or fees for service in developing JCCs is possible as a result of the change of the psyche of the local Jewish community.

E. JCCs are local.

The local nature of JCCs allows them to become the venue for the most locally authentic programming, and therefore sets the stage for the JCC to play a major role in the evolving and self-identified Jewish community in the larger context.

F. JCCs provide an opportunity for governance that encourages lay involvement and leadership in Jewish communal life.

JCCs bring together people with disparate world views to learn, to listen, and compromise. Every JCC has limitations - physical, financial, etc. - and lay leaders must work within these limitations and learn the value of trade offs, building coalitions, and consensus. Because the JCC’s catchment area is so diverse, it provides a unique forum within which policies affecting the community at large are created.

JCCs are therefore positioned to play a leading role in the life of any Jewish community around the world.
2. Defining Mentoring

Mentoring – from the Greek word meaning enduring - is defined as a sustained relationship between an experienced professional, the “mentor,” and a less experienced colleague, the “mentee.” Traditionally, a mentor is a trusted counselor, guide, or coach who analyzes and capitalizes on the mentees’ strengths, develops ideas to improve areas of weakness, and supports and nurtures the mentee’s professional growth by providing advice, information, and support. In this manual, “mentor” will refer to the senior staff member and “mentee” will refer to the less experienced colleague.

In this program, however, the learning process is two-directional. The mentee will certainly gain knowledge from the mentor’s experience and expertise, but the less experienced colleagues will also teach their mentors, the senior Executive Directors, about the successes, challenges and obstacles of the local Jewish community in which the new JCC operates. It is expected that “reverse mentoring and learning” will also take place as it is essential to the program’s success.

Mentors wish to impart their knowledge to less experienced colleagues in an effort to leave a legacy that allows others to move up on the ladder of professional success. Trust is the key ingredient to a successful mentor-mentee relationship and the quality of their relationship sets the stage for a successful outcome. Successful mentoring requires learning how to be a mentor or mentee, as well as an ongoing commitment to the mentoring process. Each must have an understanding of the teaching-learning process and have appropriate and realistic expectations of each other.

Both the mentor and mentee require certain qualities and attributes in order for the mentoring program to be successful.

Desired Qualities in a Mentor

• Actively listens
• Open and non-judgmental
• Enables and empowers
• Has patience
• Acts as a role model and advocate
• Has leadership experience
• Is available and responsive
• Is willing to share expertise and insight
• Believes in the capabilities of the mentee
• Motivates, supports, and enhances the mentee’s development
• Has vision
• Is current in his/her knowledge of the field
• Knows how to access professional networks

Desired Qualities in a Mentee

• Listens
• Has a desire to learn
• Has a capacity to accept constructive feedback and coaching
• Has an ability to identify personal and professional career goals
• Has a willingness to take risks
• Seeks challenging assignments and new responsibilities
• Acts on advice
• Shows commitment
• Actively seeks the advice and counsel of an experienced mentor

Successful mentoring programs are fulfilling to both the mentor and the mentee. A mentee benefits from having a relationship with a mentor who supports, guides, teaches, and challenges him or her. Through this relationship, the mentee will gain the skills and self-confidence necessary to succeed and excel. By sharing information and insights with members of their own profession, mentors enable others to maximize their potential, thereby improving the caliber of JCCs on a global scale. Mentoring fosters the growth and development of other senior staff members who will, in turn, become experts and pass their knowledge and expertise to future generations of leaders.

Personal Insight

Moshe Hazut says it is hard to translate a culture. For example, when working with Ethiopian Jews in Israel, they never say no. Therefore, it is difficult for us to understand why they did not do something. Still, we have a strong connection thanks to the Jewish way of life. To use a metaphor, we are like a salad where each ingredient maintains its original taste, as opposed to a melting pot.
3. What is the need for mentoring in the JCC world? Who is it for?

The best resource of any Jewish Community Center is its personnel. While training of senior staff may be different in each geographical region, it became apparent to the World Confederation of JCCs that much can be gained from joint learning. The need became even more acute when new JCCs emerged in the Former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and were looking to learn from the experience of more veteran JCCs. On the one hand, emerging JCCs could benefit from experts in the field. At the same time, these emerging JCCs developed new concepts and capabilities that could serve as inspiration and enrichment to the more veteran ones.

Through the global network, WCJCC can access excellent staff members from more than 1100 JCCs worldwide – in North America, Israel, Europe, the Former Soviet Union and Latin America – who are ready to share their expertise and experience to help Jewish Community Centers grow and flourish. Equally as important, established JCCs have the opportunity to learn more about the challenges and successes of other Jewish communities. Cross-culturing mentoring means both parties have the opportunity to learn and gain from the experience.

This manual was written for prospective mentors and mentees who would like to be engaged in such a project and can learn from the experience of others. It can also be helpful to community organizers and the staff members of umbrella institutions. It is written with the hope that this model could be expanded to include any two JCCs around the world.

4. Short, General Description of the Model

The Professional Exchange program has four broad objectives:

a) Mentors will provide mentees with guidance, advice and support in specific service areas such as early childhood, youth, adults, seniors, cultural arts, health and fitness, marketing, membership, special needs, staff training, lay leadership development, strategic planning and development, and organizational management.

b) Mentors will help mentees develop new initiatives in areas in need of improvement.

c) The professional exchange program aims to cultivate and educate Jewish leaders from around the world so that they acquire a global Jewish overview and understand the needs of Jewish communities in various parts of the world.

d) The program aims to facilitate the creation of personal relationships between professionals and lay leaders in JCCs, thereby opening the doors for long-term collaboration and joint programming with JCCs worldwide.

Organizational Framework, Number and Duration of Visits

With the help of regional networks of JCCs, WCJCC selects professionals from around the world who could benefit from a professional exchange.

The Professional Exchange program is approximately 18 months (with the option to continue, depending on the needs of the participants) during which the mentor and mentee meet three times in a one-on-one setting and one time at a retreat in Israel attended by all of the mentors and mentees in the program.

During the first 12 months, three one-on-one visits of 5-10 days each take place. Ideally, the first visit is made by the mentor to his or her mentee. The first visit includes an introduction to the new culture, setting expectations, assessing the strengths and needs of the JCC, and understanding the local and regional frameworks. The mentor and mentee will work together to create a document which outlines the areas of priority on which their work will focus.

Ideally, the second visit follows the first visit within about three months. During this visit, the mentee visits his or her mentor to shadow him or her and to continue the consultation with hands-on work and training days.
For the third one-on-one visit, the mentor again travels to the mentee to continue to work with him/her on the work plan that they created together over the course of the first two visits. Between the visits, on-going communication and consultation should take place to the greatest extent possible.

Finally, near the end of the structured program, all of the mentors and mentees gather at a retreat in Israel implemented by the WCJCCs to talk about their experiences and learn from each other. One of the goals of this retreat is to facilitate the creation of a supportive global network of colleagues.

5. First Steps: How to Begin

Creating Buy-In on Both Sides

It is essential that the mentor and mentee have buy-in from their respective lay leadership to participate in this mentoring program. The success of this program is dependent upon the relationship between the mentor and mentee as well as the larger relationships between the JCCs—their lay leadership, their staff, and perhaps even the Jewish communities they each serve. If the relationship between the two JCCs continues after the formal program ends, this is beneficial to both communities and all of their respective components.

Personal Insight

Neil Taylor, London: “At first, I found in Kharkov more of a cultural center. We then tried to ask where is the Jewish community and how we can build a Jewish community. There are different tools to achieve this goal and also different populations: active Jews, weak populations, volunteers, other partner organizations. There is importance in building a Jewish community on social, educational and recreational levels.”

Establishing a Relationship

To a large extent, the one-on-one relationship between the mentor and mentee sets the stage for the success or failure of the program. A trusting relationship between the mentor and mentee will allow both parties to feel good about giving and receiving advice, creating joint or shared programming ideas, and watching the relationship between their JCCs grow. Before the mentor and mentee get to work creating their list of priorities and work plan, it is essential that the two set the stage in order to develop a trusting relationship. It takes time for this kind of relationship to be established but both parties play an essential role.
One Candle Lighting Another

When Sherry Kulman from Toronto visited Kishinev she requested a minyan so that she could recite Kaddish for her recently deceased father. Community members responded quickly. “We went to a nearby theatre one evening where they handed out a piece of paper with the Kaddish phonetically translated into Russian and everyone recited it” says Kulman. “And what was so stark for me was the fact that they really didn’t have the knowledge, but it was also very heartwarming because they did everything they could to put it together for me.”

Personal Insight

When asked what she gained from the program, Alona Van Yu of Tashkent said, “A new friend and a valuable experience.”

Personal Insight

Some things for the mentor to consider:

• Listen
• Ask questions
• Take time to learn about the context, history and cultural norms
• Gain an understanding of the regional and local framework in which the JCC operates
• Be open-minded and non-judgmental
• Honor and acknowledge the work of the mentee
• Focus on the JCC’s strengths as well as areas in need of improvement
• Offer alternatives or different approaches rather than a “right” and “wrong” way of doing things
• Try to ensure clear communication
• Attitudes and emotions can be just as important as facts on the ground.Try to collect information on (and act on) feelings, as well as, the facts.

Some things for the mentee to consider:

• Share as much information as possible; the mentor wants to help and needs to understand context, history and cultural norms
• Listen
• Be open-minded
• Improvement requires change; try to overcome resistance to change (or at least be aware of the resistance)
• Try to focus on creative outcomes, not constraints
• Take as much advantage as possible of the mentor’s expertise and experience in running a successful JCC.

Personal Insight

Tatiana Sergeeva from Odessa gained a “broader picture on existing programs and new ideas from Buddy Sapolsky’s valuable experience in Baltimore.”

Be Aware of Potential Obstacles

Some obstacles are simply out of the mentors and mentees hands but others can be overcome if both the mentor and the mentee are aware of them and are willing to work on them.

Potential obstacles include:

• Cultural differences/sensitivities
• Unrealistic expectations
• Language barriers
• Expectations between visits
• Setbacks and detours due to funding cuts and/or staff turnover
One Candle Lighting Another

When Elena Melnik of Chelyabinsk visited Jay Roth at the Milwaukee JCC, she was puzzled by Americans’ sports orientation and the extensive number of non-Jews at the JCC. She was positively impressed by the freedom given to small children. As she became aware of these cultural differences, she and Jay became more sensitive to them.

**Personal Insight**

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The Moscow staff shared a Russian expression that describes how Muscovites make decisions and act on plans: “Russians measure seven times but cut once.” This expression was explained to mean that they are careful and thoughtful in their deliberations but are also concerned about making errors and their subsequent consequences. This expression helped Lew and Irene Stolzenberg from New York understand and be more sensitive to this cultural difference. In the beginning, Lew and Irene felt that the Moscow staff members did not appear to absorb or accept some information or recommendations immediately. However, after a few days, the staff would come back to the recommendation and at that time, they would have excellent discussions or voice questions about how to implement those recommendations.

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6. The First Visit

Ideally, the first visit is a visit by the mentor to the mentee’s community. This first visit is an opportunity to meet and for the mentor to learn about the context in which the JCC is operating. The mentor should focus on learning about areas such as mapping the community, understanding the JCC within the context of the community, the mentee’s circle of operation (lay and staff), learning about the JCC’s strengths (and how to build upon them), as well as areas of improvement.

By the end of the first visit, the mentor and mentee will develop a work plan for the duration of the project. This work plan will be tailor-made to the priorities and specific issues raised in each JCC. However, in addition to learning about individual programs, successes, and challenges in each JCC, it is suggested that all of the mentees educate their mentors about what is being done, if anything, in the areas of:

- The vision and mission of the JCC
- Fundraising and fees for service
- Increasing membership
- Marketing strategies
- Board development
- Program services
- Staff structure and staff responsibilities

These broad areas tend to be of high priority in most JCCs.

**Personal Insight**

Jay Roth from Milwaukee and Elena Melnik from Chelyabinsk identified four areas upon which to focus:

- Outreach through priority programs (e.g., A family club, a business school, and a children day center)
- The Jewish House branding
- The widening of public space
- Elena’s professional training as the Executive Director

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During the first visit, the responsibility falls on the mentee to educate his or her mentor to the greatest extent possible. The mentor’s role during this visit is to gain as much information as possible and provide feedback and advice in a way that does not break the trust that the two parties are working to establish. It is suggested that the mentor uses the following strategies to give advice, especially during this first visit:

- Ask lots of questions but try not to give too many answers
- Be a sounding board for ideas
- Challenge assumptions by explicitly asking about how programs and activities relate to the JCC’s overall mission
- Provide examples from your JCC with a focus on transferable methodologies and frameworks.
- Both the mentor and the mentee should have an open mind toward creating some sort of joint program, if possible.

Regina Kravitz-Yoffe of Moscow recommends that mentees consider involving key staff members, such as the Jewish educator, in helping to teach the mentor about the JCC.

Potential Obstacles to Success

Mentors and mentees should also be on the alert for obstacles to success and work toward understanding and overcoming them. For example, some challenges that have been identified:

- Be realistic about how to gauge success (and failure). The forging of a strong, mutually beneficial relationship between the mentor and mentee is a huge success.
- Language Barriers: It was suggested by one mentor that he or she be absolutely sure that what he or she says is being translated exactly, without commentary by the translator.
- Understanding the context, history, and cultural norms in each others’ JCCs so that mentors may apply their experience and expertise in a meaningful way.
- Overcoming anxiety about being an expert (mentors) or about not meeting expectations (mentees).
- Ideally, mentors and mentees should have collective ownership of ideas; their successes (and areas in need of improvement) should be mutually owned.
- There is resistance to change in every work environment; change may be harder; or take more time than originally thought.

Alona Van Yu, from Tashkent, recommends, “A mentee has to abandon the idea of financial support from the mentor’s side. A mentee should not hesitate to make all possible efforts to introduce necessary changes.”

Sherry Kullman from Toronto wrote after her first visit: “A particular challenge was brainstorming about effective but inexpensive programs and ways to build up the centre’s donor base, in a culture in which there is almost no history of paying for Jewish communal services.”

Creating a Work Plan

Toward the end of the first visit, the mentor and mentee should work together to create an action plan. They should prioritize the areas to be focused upon, develop specific steps to be taken in each of those areas (with a timeline, if appropriate) and determine when they will check in with one another.

When creating the work plan, it is also important to think about defining success. At the end of the 18-month program, the mentor and mentee should be able to look back on their work plan and be able to point to some measurable areas of success (or partial success).

Setting Expectations

Mentors and mentees should also be clear about their expectations and the scope of the mentorship. The mentor and mentee should be creating an open, trusting relationship and while it is not possible to script the organic nature of such an interaction, it is important that both parties be on the same page in terms of their expectations of each other.
Lew and Irene Stolzenberg from New York identified several organizational changes that needed to be made at the Nikitskaya JCC in Moscow in an effort to help streamline the staff’s jobs and the Board’s involvement in programming. They worked together with Regina Kraviz-Yoffe to refocus the mission (and determine how they were fulfilling the mission), develop the skills necessary to access resources and to engage and educate the Board in better defining and understanding their roles as Board members.

Previous experience has shown that working on a joint project (an exchange of artwork, an exchange of summer campers, etc.) will facilitate communication between visits. Joint programming is recommended if it is feasible; it is not required. Regardless, mentors and mentees should be clear about how often they will check in with each other between visits and decide what mode of communication (phone, email) they prefer. Some mentors and mentees felt that regular, permanent communication via email or phone was critical to the program’s success. Others felt that the mentee needed time to implement ideas and therefore, did not prefer regular, permanent communication between visits. Regardless, all of the mentors and mentees agreed that some communication between visits is essential to building the relationship. It is suggested that mentors and mentees be in touch with each other at least once a month between visits.

The common language of cultural arts resulted in good chemistry between Uri Strizover from Israel and Ilia Baazov from Tbilisi. They worked together to develop a cultural arts and dance center in Tbilisi. They developed the business model and content areas.

It is not easy for mentors and mentees to communicate regularly. The languages may be problematic, time differences, and the demanding nature of the Executive Director’s position means that both the mentor and the mentee must make a commitment to checking in with each other from time to time.

Reporting Progress

Mentors and mentees are both asked to submit a report to the WCJCC after every visit. The report should include details about the work plan, priorities, timeline, challenges, and expectations of each other.

Lena Melnik from Chelyabinsk tried several times to email her mentor, Jay Roth of Milwaukee. She did not realize that her email was coming through as SPAM and therefore, Jay’s staff deleted it. After several unanswered emails, Lena understandably felt discouraged. But she did not give up; they eventually realized the problem and fixed it!
7. The Second Visit

About three or four months after the first visit, the mentee visits his or her mentor and shadows him or her to learn more about how these Executive Directors successfully run their JCCs. This is an opportunity for the mentee to meet the JCC staff and lay leadership, as well as gain in-service training.

The challenge is for the mentor to focus the mentee upon transferable programs and concepts. It is understandable how a mentee may be distracted or even demoralized by the beauty and size of the facility, instead of focusing on what he or she can learn from the children’s programming or the adult Jewish learning courses, which may very well be replicated in other JCCs.

After returning from shadowing Buddy Sapolsky of Baltimore, Tatiana Sergeeva of Odessa commented, “I absolutely feel the experience I had in Baltimore was extremely productive. Even though there are a myriad of differences between our cultures, communities, and agencies, there are enough similarities for the exchange to be meaningful. More importantly, I experienced, in person, how a JCC operates, how to encourage interdisciplinary relationships with staff, with other Jewish organizations, the role lay leadership plays, the issues an Executive Director deals with and the role that I should play. We also spent a good deal of time discussing the issues and challenges I will face in my quest to become a productive, efficient director.”

Personal Insight

Toward the end of this visit, the parties should revisit the work plan they created together at the end of their first visit. Mentors and mentees should aim to address the following questions:

- What progress has been made since the first visit?
- Does anything need to be re-prioritized?
- Can some issues be dropped and/or others added?
- What are the challenges?
- What is the new timeline?
- Are there new or refined expectations of each other?
- What is the plan for on-going communication?

The first and second visits are very different experiences and some time should be devoted to understanding how to bridge those differences. Mentors should highlight transferable concepts and programming ideas to their mentees and also need to ensure to the greatest extent possible that their mentees will be returning home with enthusiasm and a few new tools in their toolbox in order to transfer their learning into action in their JCCs. Mentors should also offer mentees methodologies and frameworks for applying their learning as these kinds of conceptual ideas may be relatively easily transferred.

Personal Insight

Neil Taylor from London worked on building a trusting relationship so that he could be in a better position to provide constructive feedback on the workings of the JCC in Kharkov. His objective was to help the senior staff at the JCC in Kharkov define what they believe their goals should be and, not to come in as a consultant with all the answers. Simply put, his formula for success was: Ask questions, learn, and build trust. He asked a lot of questions but did not give too many answers; acted as a mirror/sounding board, challenged assumptions, and provided practical examples from his experience. Neil wrote and spoke with candor about his anxiety in this role. In spite of his initial concerns about how the staff felt about having a “consultant” visit the JCC, he established a level of trust that allowed him to feel more confident about making suggestions and prompting thoughts about new ideas. He felt that his contribution met the Kharkov staff’s expectations of his role.
8. The Third Visit

About a year after the first visit, the mentor visits the mentee again in his or her community. During this visit, the work plan that the parties created (and edited) during their previous visits, and throughout their on-going communication, will serve as an itinerary. During the consultation, the mentor and mentee are asked to revisit their initial and revised work plans and reflect on how they may see things differently as a result of gaining perspective about their respective cultures. This visit also serves as an opportunity for the mentee to highlight his or her achievements and accomplishments as well as to explore the reasons some goals may not have been met.

It is important that both parties remember that neither is being judged in this process and that the fact that they have built a positive, mutually-educational relationship is a successful achievement!

Personal Insight

Moshe Hazut from Haifa and Alona van Yu initiated an extensive process of evaluation and needs assessment in the community and Alona has been very receptive to change and challenge. Alona agreed that the vision and mission of the JCC needed to be reexamined in an effort to strengthen the role of the JCC in Tashkent’s changing environment. During the third visit this change was transmitted to the JCC staff during a weeklong retreat.

9. The Fourth Visit: A Retreat in Israel

The final meeting will take place at a retreat in Israel with all of the other mentors and mentees in the program. This is an excellent opportunity to exchange ideas, network, celebrate success, and continue building relationships globally among Jewish leaders. The retreat signals the end of the structured mentoring relationship between the parties but of course if there is a need and/or an interest on behalf of both to continue to work together the WCJCC will do all that it can to facilitate its continuance.

Personal Insight

In the wrap-up session of the June 2007 retreat in Israel, participants expressed their gratitude to the World Confederation of JCCs and to JDC for how much they were enriched by this gathering. Some admitted that they were skeptical at first as to the advantages of such a project, but after this retreat they were confident that it had a lot of value. It was felt that a strong international group had developed. Everyone was eager to continue participating in the project.

Personal Insight

Tatyana Sergeeva from Odessa: The retreat gave me an opportunity to meet other peers personally and establish good mutual relations. I used these contacts, for instance, while organizing Odessa Klezmer Fest -2008 in June, inviting Klezmer bands from all over the FSU. It also gave me a broader picture of what is going on in Jewish communities across the FSU and around the world.

A note on off-cycle visits

The outline of the visits described in this manual reflect an ideal timeline. In reality, the mentee may visit the mentor first instead of vice versa, or the joint retreat may fall in the middle of the eighteen-month program instead of the end. Both parties can still benefit from the learning that takes place during “off-cycle” programming.
10. Implementing Joint Programming

Joint programming between JCCs is not a required component of this program but if it is possible to implement such a program, it is recommended. Joint programming ensures discussion between mentors and mentees will take place between visits. It also allows the staff members from each of the JCCs to develop relationships with their counterparts (and therefore feel connected to and part of this project). It provides opportunities for lay leaders to get involved and allows the greater Jewish community in both countries to learn more about global Jewry.

First Steps: Finding a Joint Project

Joint projects highlight the shared objectives of JCCs around the world. They also draw attention to the challenges that JCCs face, regardless of whether they are located in North or South America, the FSU, Israel or Europe. Joint programming also enlarges the relationship to reach more people: lay, staff, and community-wide.

Joint projects should be something that is of interest to both the mentor’s and the mentee’s JCC. Both should be explicit about what each side will contribute to the program’s success. It is suggested that mentors and mentees start by discussing shared problems and/or topics in an effort to find some common ground.

Personal Insight

Personal Insight: Harry Stern and Sofia Filkova created four exchange programs between the Marcus JCC of Atlanta and the Emunah JCC of Minsk:
• The sale of Belarus artists works in Atlanta at a Jewish festival as well as at Chanukah.
• A number of Minsk musicians visited Atlanta and played three musical concerts for the community.
• Several of Atlanta’s teens participated in a Teen Ambassador’s Trip to Minsk.
• Six teens and a counselor spent one month at the Atlanta JCC’s summer overnight camp, Camp Barney Mednick, two years in a row.

Creating Buy-In from the JCCs Lay Leadership and Staff

Buy-in from both the lay leadership and the JCC staff is crucial to a joint project’s success. The project must be prioritized and promoted in the community. The staff from each JCC must have an opportunity to meet each other (virtually or face to face) and expand their knowledge of one another.

Just as with the mentoring relationship, on-going communication and realistic expectations, along with a budget, are necessary components for a successful joint program.

Neil Taylor, Director of Community Services, Jewish Care, in London, hosted a delegation of staff members from Kharkov. The visit allowed the staff from both institutions meet one another and learn about each other’s community, it got them thinking about how their JCCs might cooperate with one another, it allowed for the establishment of working relationships between staff members, and allowed them to identify reasons for developing partnerships. This visit was one of the first steps to creating a bridge between the communities.

Personal Insight

Zhanna Maistrenko from Kharkov commenting on her community’s joint program with Jewish Care’s Sinclair House in London, “Over time, the mentoring process became a partnership.”
Consult with WCJCC

WCJCC is ready to assist mentors and mentees who want to begin joint programming and need some assistance. For specific details, contact the WCJCC office.

Personal Insight

Asher Ostrin writes: “Fortunately, JDC has a partner in the arena of Jewish Renewal, the World Confederation of Jewish Community Centers. Jerry Spitzer, Chair of the WCJCC and also a JDC board member, and Smadar Bar Akiva, the very capable professional who runs the organization, recognized from the outset the tremendous opportunities of the training challenges in the FSU. They have access to large numbers of JCC professionals, and have experience in bridging the cultural chasms among communities all over the globe. They could help make these JCCs work, and indeed they have done so.”

II. How to Evaluate Success

Following the pilot stage of the project WCJCC commissioned the Florence G. Heller/ JCC Association of North America Research Center to conduct evaluation. The evaluation process included reading reports, interviews with project participants and discussions with staff members. The evaluators concluded that: “Much progress was made in each of the goal areas. Mentors and mentees were keen on continuing the visits and would like to develop methods for ongoing communication between visits. Respect for each other and enthusiasm for this pilot project permeated the interviews. Clearly, this historic pilot program is having an impact on mentors and mentees, alike. It is very exciting to consider the possibilities that these relationships may have on the larger communities.”

At each stage of the project mentors and mentees are asked to evaluate success by reviewing their original (and revised) work plan in order to document their achievements and benchmarks. It is important to remember that eighteen months is a relatively short period of time. Partial achievements and “first steps” toward goals are notable achievements in and of themselves. Changing world views as a result of the mentorship program and positive changes such as personal growth experiences that translate into action on the job should also be included as indicators of success.

Below are a few examples of how the different mentoring relationships evaluated their progress.

When new programs are launched, it is relatively easy to document success. Moscow’s Regina Kravitz-Yoffe was mentored by Lew and Irene Stolzenberg from Staten Island. During the course of the mentorship, Regina’s JCC completed their business plan and launched a day care center program for children from the ages of 6 months to 7 years old. In September, the Moscow JCC began an after-school program for children and they are in the planning stages of opening the first grade of a day school. Regina credited Lew and Irene with most of her knowledge about how to operate her JCC and launch successful business projects.

Equally important to launching new programs is the acquisition of skills. In Minsk, Sonya Filkova learned from Harry Stern of Atlanta how to introduce modern fundraising methods, how to apply for and submit grant requests, and how to introduce new directions to the Board of Directors.

Alyona Van Yu of Tashkent worked with Moshe Hazut of Haifa on refining the vision and mission of the JCC. The goals of the JCC were updated and the community values were put in writing. As a result, the first staff training seminar took place and the JCC is beginning its transformation in order to adjust to its changing environment and strengthen its role in the Jewish community.
At Beit Dan, the JCC of Kharkov, the activities of the Jewish Youth Association were revamped as a result of Neil and Zhanna’s review of the plan for the leadership and volunteerism school, as well as examining the youth activities in other organizations throughout the city. Neil and Zhanna’s philosophical discussion about the need to inspire young people to participate in such programs on the basis of their willingness and commitment to give back to their community (i.e., their sense of volunteerism) was an issue that crossed international borders. They found that the Sinclair House JCC in London and the Kharkov JCC both struggle with how to engage young people. As a result of their joint work, a thriving youth program was developed in Kharkov.

**Personal Insight**

Borris Rubinstein, former Executive Director, Nikitskaya JCC, Moscow: “What we have received during these meetings is the aggregate knowledge of years of experience that we don’t have in Moscow. All the meetings with Lew Stolzenberg were very beneficial and we learned a lot. Nikitskaya is going through a major transformation these days. It is introducing the concept of fees for services, it is beginning to grapple with issues of fundraising, marketing, lay leadership development. Lew’s expertise in all these areas helped us in this transition. We hope that the relationship with Lew and with JCCs around the world will continue and flourish.”

Main accomplishments:
- Qualitative and quantitative improvement in JCC service areas
- Professional and personal growth for FSU Executive Directors
- JCC to JCC partnerships emerged
- Mentors were enriched and inspired
- A successful model developed

**12. Conclusion**

Successful partnerships between established and emerging JCCs have the potential to result in numerous benefits to both parties, personally as well as professionally. From the wealth of written materials, personal interviews and extensive discussions with project participants and staff members it became apparent that:

a. The project showed a real contribution and improvement in various aspects of JCC’s performance.

b. Mentors who were asked to volunteer and give found out that they were enriched and inspired in ways that they did not anticipate.

c. The need for a close detailed supervision by WCJCC and JDC staff members with attention to cross cultural differences was critical for the success of the project.

d. While the gains of the project are apparent throughout this document, it is a long term project that reaps future benefits.

e. Despite that fact that each JCC is different, there were many similarities and points of reference that invited sharing and joint learning.

Hopefully this manual will open doors for new participants and for the development of new models and variations that will help strengthen JCCs worldwide.

“Like a person who kindles one candle from another, the candle keeps itself alight and the second too stays aflame”

(Bamidbar Raba)
Appendix

Project Founders:
Jerry Spitzer, Chair, WCJCC and JDC Board Member
Ralph Goldman, Past President, WCJCC and JDC President Emeritus
Jerome Makowsky, President, WCJCC, Memphis, Tennessee, USA
Jane Gellman, Project Chair; WCJCC President Elect, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA
Menachem Revivi, Chair, WCJCC Advisory Committee

Project Director:
Smadar Bar Akiva, Executive Director, WCJCC, Jerusalem, Israel

Project participants:
1. Staten Island JCC, New York, USA - Moscow, Russia
   Regina Kavitz-Yoffee- Executive Director, Nikitskaya JCC, Moscow, Russia
   Lew Stolzenberg – Executive Director, Staten Island JCC, New York, USA

2. Atlanta JCC, Georgia, USA- Minsk, Belarus
   Sofia Filkova – Executive Director; Emunah JCC, Minsk, Belarus
   Harry Stern – Executive Director; Marcus JCC, Atlanta, Georgia, USA

3. MATAN, IACC, Israel- Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine
   Galina Radnikov – Executive Director; Dnepropetrovsk JCC, Ukraine
   Uri Strizover – Executive Director; MATAN, IACC, Israel

4. MATAN, IACC, Israel- Zaporozhe, Ukraine
   Innesa Vishenko- Executive Director; JCC of Zaporozhe, Ukraine
   Uri Strizover – Executive Director; MATAN, IACC, Israel

5. Jewish Care, London, England- Kharkov, Ukraine
   Zhanna Maistrenko – Executive Director; Beit Dan JCC, Kharkov, Ukraine
   Neil Taylor – Deputy Director; Community Services, Jewish Care, London, England

6. Harry and Rose Samson Family JCC, Milwaukee, WI, USA – Chelyabinsk Jewish House, Russia
   Lena Melnik- Executive Director; Chelyabinsk JCC, Russia
   Jay Roth- Executive Director; Harry and Rose Samson Family JCC, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA

7. Neve Yossef, Haifa, IACC, Israel-Tashkent, Uzbekistan
   Moshe Hazut- Executive Director; Neve Yossef Community Center; Haifa, IACC, Israel
   Alona Van Yu- Executive Director; Tashkent JCC, Uzbekistan

8. Toronto JCC, Canada-Kishinev, Moldova
   Sherry Kulman- Executive Director; Toronto JCC, Ontario, Canada
   Stella Harmelina- Executive Director; Kedem JCC, Kishinev, Moldova

9. MATAN, IACC, Israel- Tbilisi, Georgia
   Ilia Baazov- Director of Cultural Arts, Tbilisi, Georgia

Main JDC staff involved in the project (2004-2008):
Stanley Abramowitz- Country Director JDC, FSU Department (Israel)
Dr. Assaf Kaniel- Director of Jewish Renewal Program in the FSU, (Israel)
Alik Nadan – City Director JDC, FSU Department (Russia)
Shaul Dritter- Country Director JDC, FSU Department (Israel)
Shira Genish – JDC Representative, FSU Department (Ukraine)
Jonathan Porath- Country Director, JDC, FSU Department (Israel)
Max Weisel- Country Director, JDC, FSU Department (Israel)

Project Consultants:
Asher Ostrin- Executive Director, JDC FSU Department (Israel)
Dalia Lev-Sade -JDC, FSU Department (Israel)
Orna Gerling- JDC, FSU Department (Israel)
Alan Mann- Executive Vice President of JCC Association (USA)
Dorit Rom- Director of International Relations and Resource Development, IACC (Israel)
One Candle Lighting Another

Post script:
This poem was written by Uri Strizover from Israel upon his return from his first visit to the
Ukraine, February, 2004

CRUMBS OF BLACK BREAD
by Uri Strizover

1.
Darkness, the plane slows on the smooth runway
"Priletlyeli" (we have arrived).
Russian is bandied in the air
At eight degrees below zero
Frozen, unsmiling faces:
WELCOME TO DNEPROPETROVSK

Sliding on stairs of ice
The ankle gets twisted, grasping the broken railing
It's alright to stare at the fur hat
Forbidden to look into extinguished eyes.

2.
Walking the curved path between unfinished structures
In black overcoat and bent over the snow
With a layer of thousands of freezing years
The ice covers the bald trees
The branches yearning to be covered with a blanket.

Seven small children
Sleep together in one bed
A man in underpants roams the kitchen
Which also serves as bathroom and bedroom.
A little girl is eating, food dripping from her chin
The plate's cabbage smell attaches itself to the coat
A broken pipe leaks stains onto a tin pot.

3.
A flaking, flowered wallpaper covers the wall
The pale blossom doesn't fade in the noise
The wall shakes
A roaring train? Falling snow?

A blind man sweeps the flakes
Collects the ice into piles.
His head shifts with the wind
His frozen feet buried in the snow.

4.
A little lady sings:
"I will play on an old violin".
Her eyes invite tears
Musical sounds leak around the room.

The man's fingers amble over the violin
The lad is on the drums
The clarinet accompanies the old songstress
Crying about her days, my days
The days of my parents, their parents.

Colouring words in Russian and Yiddish
In the brown dish of Shabbat
Shaking from me crumbs of black bread
At the Friday meal.
Kissing an ancient princess
On her wrinkled cheek
I squeeze my body into the long coat
And the black hats shut me in.

(Translated from the Hebrew by Asher Tarmon)