MAKING TEEN EDUCATION A COMMUNITY PRIORITY

The Funder Collaborative aspired to elevate Jewish teen education and engagement as a priority issue in the 10 participating communities. In its "founding documents," the Funder Collaborative envisaged indications of success in this realm as including:

> Continued/increasing/guaranteed financial support from the local Federation; public statements from varied stakeholders about the importance of community-wide teen engagement; multi-institutional collaborations to engage teens; financial and/or volunteer involvement of families of teens; increasing numbers of teens on boards of local Jewish communal organizations; and strategic communications and outreach tools that foster the development of broad community support. (Text excerpted from full version of Measure of Success #5)

The Cross-Community Evaluation's Sustainability Diagnostic Tool (SDT) and accompanying scoring rubric brought this concept to life in the five communities that used it to date. Similarly, the communities that are near the end of their grant cycle instructed their local evaluators to gather data around these indicators explicitly.

The third and final installment of the Funder Collaborative Case Study depicts the ways in which community initiatives helped to positively influence and elevate a broader culture shift around the status of Jewish teen education and engagement more generally. What are some of the specific pieces of evidence at the community level suggesting that this elevation did or did not occur?

Looking across the 10 communities, we see evidence of inroads and progress. In New York, the phenomena that come closest to indicating a shift are the creation of the Find Your Summer Ambassadors recruitment initiative and the FindYourSummer website. The same goes for Chicago's Teen Engagement Specialists, a new concierge role in the community. These mechanisms reflect teen engagement understood as a community challenge, not simply a matter of each organization trying to meet its own recruitment targets and educational goals.

In Baltimore, interviews with teen program leaders and community leaders suggest that the initiative led to a more collectivist orientation to engaging teens—an "all for one, one for all" ethos. Specifically, 4Front was established as a hub, a go-to address for youth-serving organizations and their professionals, and successfully nurtured strong relationships that undergird this evolving culture.

In a similar vein, stakeholders in the Boston area agree that the initiative supported greater collaboration among professionals and programs than previously existed. However, while there are now fewer "turf and territory" issues and a reduction in duplication of offerings, stakeholders still report that programs are competing for the same funding or already-engaged teens.

In the Bay Area, the teen initiative employed different levers to elevate and expand work with teens. They invested in JBridge, an online hub for sharing information and resources about teen engagement. They developed grantmaking guidelines to elevate the expectations and requirements of teen engagement efforts for organizations applying for support. And they employed the Sustainability Diagnostic Tool to bring greater attention at the organizational level to the concept of sustainability for teen work.

It is too early to determine the results of these various strategies, but community stakeholders are positive about the prospects.

In San Diego, a group of stakeholders, including educators, teens, parents, and rabbis see various components of the initiative as laying essential groundwork for sustainable, community-wide prioritization of teen education and engagement. These components include (a) building teen leaders, (b) gaining educators' (youth professionals') commitment and collaboration, (c) creating multiple pathways for teens to engage, and (d) redefining success with data.

When it comes to developing the infrastructure for a sustained shift around the status of Jewish teen education and engagement more generally, communities repeatedly point to changes regarding how they now service and support their youth professionals (see above). They reference more networks, more sharing of ideas, and more learning among frontline educators, although less so at the supervisor level. **The widespread nature of these changes and the enthusiasm with which they were embraced suggest that it is via this means—through the creation of scaffolding and infrastructure that supports the work of youth professionals—more than through the creation and launch of new programs that the Funder Collaborative's investments may have the most far-reaching impact.**

Finally, there is evidence that evaluation work was an intervention in and of itself on this measure. Most immediately, because of the need to report on progress and impact in a systematic and ongoing fashion, educators have become socialized in and enabled to contribute to a data-informed youth-serving culture; they're tracking teen participants to a degree that few were doing previously. **More broadly, the several data gathering activities happening across the communities—with data coming from youth professionals; from Federations, foundations, and/or organizational leaders; from parents; and of course from teens—contributed, in the opinion of the local evaluators, to some of the elevation of teen education and engagement.** Some communities have now even brought these kinds of data-gathering activities in house, increasing the likelihood that they will continue employing such practices. While this may seem circular, the process of being asked about dimensions of teen education and engagement, and then consuming and contemplating data about it, helped substantiate the seriousness of these endeavors.