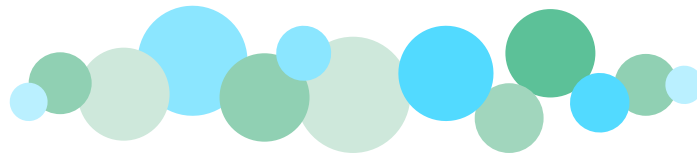




# Evaluation Executive Summary

# MOISHE HOUSE

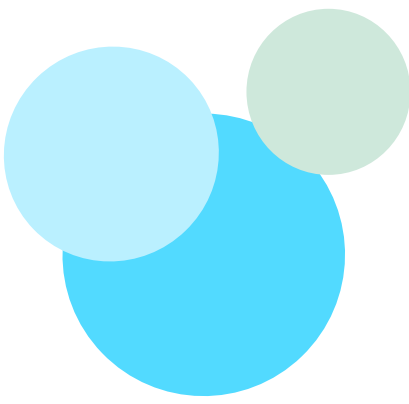
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# Executive Summary

## BACKGROUND

Founded in 2008, Moishe House is a nonprofit organization whose mission is “to provide meaningful Jewish experiences for young adults around the world by supporting leaders in their twenties as they create vibrant home-based Jewish communities.” The Moishe House model is elegant in its simplicity and impressive in its accomplishments. The organization supports an international network of resident-managed houses that build peer-based Jewish communities for post-college young adults.

Today, the network has grown to 37 houses in 14 countries with 140 active residents that will serve over 50,000 total attendees in 2011, 12,000 of whom are first-time participants. Moishe House provides a rent subsidy and a program budget to residents who are responsible for hosting on average six programs a month out of their home.

Some percentage of the programming must be Jewish-themed; otherwise, the residents have considerable freedom in deciding how programs are organized and run. It is these events, the participants they attract, and the relationships that are created that help promote Jewish growth and build vibrant Jewish communities in those cities where Moishe House has a presence.

In a very short period of time, Moishe House has attracted the support of numerous private funders and Jewish Federations and established itself as a popular and promising model for building meaningful community among young Jewish adults. In less than four years, the operating budget has increased by 75%, from \$940,000 in FY 2008 to \$2.3 million in FY 2011, and the organization continues to grow.

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## THEORY OF CHANGE

The Moishe House program is based on a theory of change that posits that providing young Jewish adults with a homelike environment and high quality program supports that facilitate the offering of meaningful programs related to Jewish spirituality and community, Jewish learning, and tikkun olam (social justice and community service) will result in strong friendships and broader peer networks. Further, participants will become more aware of the opportunities to engage in Jewish life, to be more interested in participating in Jewish life, and eventually to be more positive about their Jewish identity and more connected to their Jewish community (as they define it). These positive outcomes, in turn, will ultimately contribute to a lifelong commitment and involvement in living a Jewish life, creating a Jewish home and being active in the Jewish community.

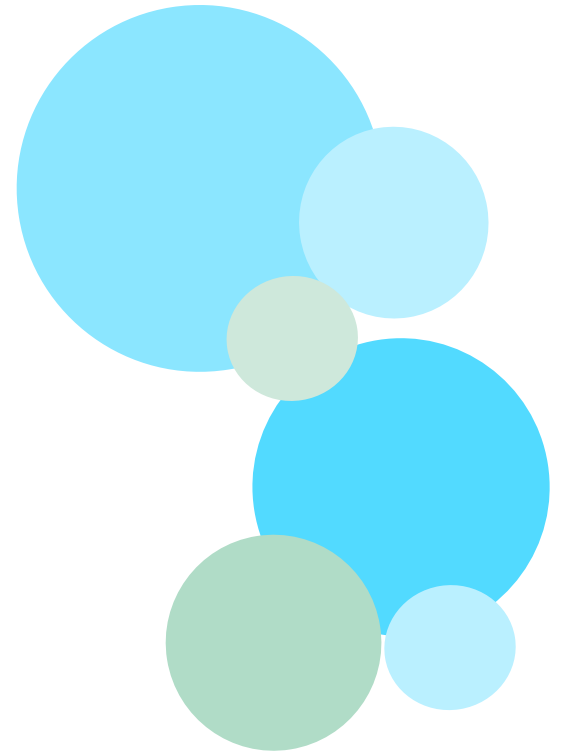
## EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

To help Moishe House to better assess and improve upon its innovative work, as well as to help sustain current achievements and maximize the chances of successful and sustainable growth, the Jim Joseph Foundation, in collaboration with the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation and Moishe House, engaged TCC Group, an independent national consulting firm that provides evaluation and planning services to nonprofits and foundations, in a three year engagement to develop and pilot an evaluation system.

### THIS EVALUATION HAS THE FOLLOWING OBJECTIVES:

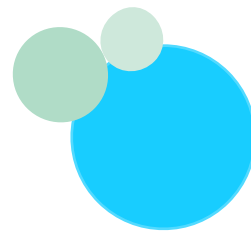
- Assess the degree to which Moishe House is achieving its programmatic and organizational outcomes as outlined in its Theory of Change;
- Increase Moishe House's internal capacity for ongoing self-assessment and learning;
- Assess Moishe House's organizational capacity to provide insights into its strengths as well as areas for growth;
- Share lessons learned with stakeholders and peers in the field related to Jewish engagement and education of emerging adults.

The findings are presented in detail in a comprehensive evaluation report. Key findings and recommendations are summarized here.



Data collection activities included interviews with Moishe House national staff and funders, residents and alumni, focus groups with participants, surveys with residents and participants, and a review of information stored in the Mintranet, Moishe House's internal tracking database. Both surveys used a retrospective pre-post design, in which survey respondents were asked to think back to their life as a post-college young adult prior to living or participating in Moishe House and to reflect on their life now. Following the data collection, the TCC consultants conducted a thorough analysis of the data. Throughout this first phase the consultants worked in close collaboration with staff from Moishe House, the Jim Joseph Foundation, and the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation to develop the evaluation plan and data collection instruments, and also to interpret the data.

# Key Findings from the Evaluation



## **Finding 1: The Moishe House model is achieving intended results.**

“It has definitely changed the way I feel about being Jewish. I have never been as proud as I am of being Jewish. It has changed my perspective, in a good way.” —Participant, Midwest

Overall, the findings from the evaluation were extremely positive. Moishe House is achieving remarkable levels of success, particularly for such a “young” organization. The data analysis found that significant progress is being made in virtually all priority areas being measured, both short-term and interim outcomes. Further, the organization is consistently implementing many elements of program quality that the analysis showed to be linked with positive outcomes.

## **Finding 2: Moishe House participants and residents are demonstrating important indicators of living more active Jewish lives after their involvement with Moishe House.**

“Before, Judaism was my parents and community. With Moishe House, I feel like it’s our Judaism.” —Participant, Midwest

Residents and participants showed increased levels of knowledge and awareness needed to live active Jewish lives and increased motivation to live active Jewish lives. Findings were quite strong for both participants and residents and show that both attitudes and behaviors are changing. For example, the percentage of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement “I have a clear understanding of what it means for me to live an active Jewish adult life” increased by 40% following involvement with Moishe House. Similarly, the percentage of participants reporting that they participate in Shabbat dinners increased by 45% following involvement with Moishe House.

## **Finding 3: Moishe House is a place where young Jews are creating new friendships with Jewish peers and building strong Jewish communities.**

“[My local Moishe House] has been a crucial part of finding my place as a new community member in

[my city] and in my Jewish life. I consistently meet fascinating, substantive people at Moishe House events, and have begun a number of meaningful relationships as a result of attending events there.” — Participant, San Francisco Bay Area

The data show that involvement in Moishe House increases and deepens young Jews’ connections and networks with other young Jews. Residents and participants are increasing their circle of Jewish peers, are becoming more aware of opportunities to meet Jewish peers, and are engaging in such activities. For example, the percentage of participants who agreed that they had a strong, supportive group of Jewish friends increased by 54% following involvement with Moishe House and the percentage of participants feeling connected to the Jewish community in their city increased by 80%. Furthermore, the percentage of participants agreeing with the statement “I have a place to go for Jewish community” nearly doubled following involvement with Moishe House. Analysis of survey data revealed that having a strong Jewish peer group is highly correlated with other measures of Jewish growth outcomes explored in the study. This result is consistent with findings in other Jewish social science research studies reviewed by TCC.<sup>1</sup>

## **Finding 4: Moishe House is reaching a diverse population of young Jewish adults, including many whose previous involvement in Jewish life is relatively limited.**

“I like that it’s not specifically one type of Judaism or one branch, open to anybody at all level of observance, all different synagogue experiences.” —Participant, Philadelphia

Established patterns of Jewish involvement would suggest that overtly Jewish programming such as that provided by Moishe House would primarily attract young adult participants who come from institutionally affiliated Jewish families who had previous Jewish experiences such as bar/bat mitzvah, Jewish day school or camp attendance, Israel travel, youth group or Hillel involvement. Jewish background information collected in the surveys suggest that Moishe House participants come from a wide range

of Jewish backgrounds and that Moishe Houses are reaching more than just the “usual suspects”. While 63% of Moishe House participants do indeed come from “strong Jewish backgrounds,”<sup>2</sup> the remaining 37% represent participants with weaker Jewish backgrounds who are discovering or rediscovering a connection Jewish life through their involvement with Moishe House.

**Finding 5: More frequent participation in Moishe House is more likely to lead participants toward living an active Jewish life.**

Data analysis shows that participants who attended Moishe House events three times a month or more demonstrated greater improvement on Jewish growth measures than those who came less than once a month. When analyzing whether different kinds of participants experience this effect differently, TCC discovered that improvements are more dramatic for participants with “weaker” Jewish backgrounds.

**Finding 6: Close to one half of Moishe House participants are Birthright Israel trip alumni.**

Although fewer than 25%<sup>3</sup> of Jewish young adults in their twenties are past Birthright Israel trip participants, a full 46% of Moishe House participant survey respondents reported having previously gone on a Birthright Israel trip. This finding suggests that Moishe Houses are a popular address for Birthright Israel trip alumni seeking to engage in Jewish life and connect with Jewish peers. When comparing the Moishe House participants who are Birthright Israel alumni to their non-alumni peers, TCC found that trip participation is not an important predictor of a participant’s level of involvement in Moishe House, nor is it a predictor of one’s likelihood of outcome achievement.

**Finding 7: Participants feel quite positively about the Moishe House model and many would like to be even more engaged.**

“Moishe House really meets our generation where we’re at. Our comfort zone is going to someone’s house, and hanging out... By Moishe House having [their events] in houses, with people living there and saying, ‘come on over and hang out’...to me, the mission is to meet us at our comfort zone and to incorporate Jewish activities into the way that our generation already is interacting with each other.”

—Participant, San Francisco Bay Area

Nearly all participants surveyed said that they believe Moishe House to be a good model for building Jewish community for young adults and nearly half said they would like to find ways to support Moishe House in addition to attending programs. Of particular note was the finding that one-third of participants indicated interest in living in Moishe House. This result validates the Moishe House staff’s assessment that there is demand among aspiring Moishe House residents to expand the model, at least in communities that already host a Moishe House.

**Finding 8: Residents want to take on leadership roles in Jewish life outside of Moishe House.**

“Moishe House is definitely changing the way I see myself in relation to the Jewish community, because they are training us to be the next generation of leaders.” —Resident, Dallas

The data show that Moishe House residents and alumni see themselves as future leaders who are committed to serving their Jewish community, with one quarter of residents indicating that they plan to work for an organization focused on Jewish causes five years from now. This finding suggests that Moishe House’s model of empowering residents as leaders could be a pipeline for future Jewish organizational professionals and

<sup>1</sup> Steven M. Cohen and Judith Veinstein concluded that strong pre-adult Jewish social networks had a strong positive effect on adult Jewish identity outcomes (Cohen, S. and J. Veinstein. “Jewish Identity: Who You Knew Affects How You Jew—The Impact of Jewish Networks in Childhood upon Adult Jewish Identity,” in *International Handbook of Jewish Education*, 2011, v. 5 part 1.)

<sup>2</sup> For analysis purposes, we defined a participant or resident as having a “strong Jewish background,” if he or she had had at least 4 of the 6 Jewish experiences identified by the evaluation team, prior to being involved with Moishe House, using Steven M. Cohen’s research as the guide to select six variables to measure respondent’s Jewish background. (1) Attended a Jewish day school; (2) Attended or worked at an overnight Jewish camp; (3) Had a Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony; (4) Raised by two Jewish parents; (5) Raised Orthodox or Conservative; and (6) Visited Israel.

<sup>3</sup> Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies Steinhardt Social Research Institute reports that as of 2010, 25% of young Jews born in 1985 had been on a Taglit-Birthright Israel trip. Penetration rates were lower for young Jews born in the years before and after 1985.

<sup>4</sup> Name reference is to David Cygielman, Moishe House Co-Founder and CEO

## Key Findings, continued

leaders. The percentage of residents who identified themselves as leaders in the Jewish community more than tripled, going from 25% before serving as residents to 79% at the time of the survey. Residents were also twice as likely to feel that they are “part of a bigger movement, working to achieve a higher cause rather than just doing something for myself”

### **Finding 9: Residents are satisfied with the resources that the national office provides them.**

Moishe House residents reported high levels of satisfaction with key resources provided by the Moishe House national office that support them in their work. Analysis of survey and interview data suggests that Moishe House’s in-person training retreats for residents, support from Moishe House professionals, its incentive grants program, and the resident application process are all considered to be especially valued by the residents who have utilized them. Resident interviewees particularly emphasized how much they value the one-on-one relationships they build with national staff. The evaluation work also surfaced specific ideas for how these and other resources might be changed or refined to more effectively achieve outcomes.

### **Finding 10: Resident alumni continue to feel a strong connection to Moishe House; there is not currently a clear role for alums beyond coming to events as participants.**

“I enjoyed every minute of it. I was part of something important locally and nationally. I have nothing but love for Moishe House and David.”<sup>4</sup> —Alum, St. Louis.

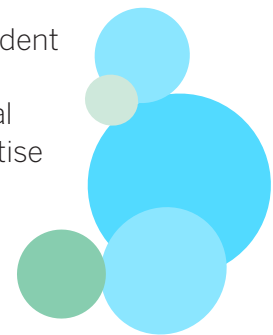
All of the Moishe House resident alumni who completed the Moishe House survey reported that they stayed in touch with other residents or alumni; however, survey data from residents and alumni indicated a low expectation of continued engagement with Moishe House. While attrition of resident alumni is a natural part of the Moishe House model, TCC believes that resident alumni represent a potential untapped resource to Moishe House given their expertise and strong allegiance to the organization.

#### Questions?

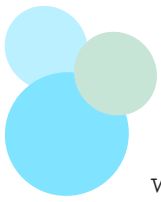
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# Recommendations

In general, the findings from the evaluation paint a very positive picture of both the quality and impact of the Moishe House model as it is currently implemented. It appears that much of what Moishe House is doing is working well, and TCC Group was impressed by the strength of the findings from the data, which indicate a mature and well-conceptualized model that can already be considered a success. The data do offer some insight about future directions and areas for improvement, however, and we share our recommendations here.

## **Recommendation 1: Explore opportunities to increase “dosage” while maintaining a balance with the flexible, locally-determined character of the program.**

The data show that participants who participate more frequently at Moishe House events are more likely to show substantial growth towards Moishe House’s articulated outcomes for participants. It may be helpful to consider whether there are strategies that could encourage more frequent participation at Moishe House activities among those who currently come to events less often that would be in line with the interests of the residents in the local houses.

## **Recommendation 2: Refine and restructure resources to residents to maximize their impact.**

Moishe House should invest time and national staff attention to analyzing the resources and supports it provides for residents to make adjustments that will maximize effectiveness. A number of the resources evaluated were found to be important and possibly underutilized. TCC suggests that staff investigate whether residents were unaware of these resources, were aware but did not find them to be of high quality, or simply did not need them. Further, staff should explore ways in which they might use their expertise from working with multiple houses in different communities to be more proactive in providing guidance or support to residents, in order to support smooth and consistent functioning of Moishe House residences. TCC Group believes that it will be increasingly important to continue to monitor the role and effectiveness of the regional directors especially as distance and virtual communication strategies become more prevalent as the number of houses (and residents) grows.

## **Recommendation 3: Moishe House should consider how to capitalize on the significant number of Moishe House participants that said they would like to live in a Moishe House.**

It appears from the data that there is an unmet demand among Moishe House participants, some of whom see themselves as candidates to serve as Moishe House residents. TCC recommends that Moishe House inquire further to determine who these participants are, what aspects of the role appeals to them, and whether this interest could be harnessed to expand the breadth and depth of Moishe House’s impact.

## **Recommendation 4: Moishe House should be deliberate in articulating goals for alumni engagement.**

Resident alumni indicated interest in remaining involved with Moishe House and supporting it, yet they are unclear

how to direct this interest. TCC Group recommends that Moishe House articulate its goals for alumni engagement, if this has not done so already, and then consider how to maximize this resource.

## **Recommendation 5: Capitalize on the connection between Moishe House and Birthright Israel.**

Birthright Israel alumni appear to be a good audience for Moishe House marketing and outreach efforts, and they should be a focus of future recruiting. Given the strong overlap in their constituencies, TCC believes that there are likely other opportunities for Moishe House and Birthright Israel to collaborate that would advance their shared goals.

## **Recommendation 6: As Moishe House prepares for expansion, the organization should focus on sharpening its understanding of key program elements and on building organizational capacity.**

The next phase of Moishe House’s organizational development will be focused on expansion, with plans to open Moishe Houses in new cities and to add houses to cities where the organization is already established. Based on the consistently high levels of outcomes achievement throughout its existing network of houses, TCC believes that the Moishe House model is well positioned to undertake significant growth. As Moishe House prepares for expansion, TCC Group strongly recommends that the organization do the following, based on findings from this evaluation study and our own knowledge of the factors contributing to successful scaling efforts:

- Continue to analyze existing findings that show relationships between key program elements and positive programmatic outcomes. As the number of residences grows, it will be essential for Moishe House staff to have a strong understanding of those elements that are critical to success
- Invest time and resources in building the capacity of the national office and staff leadership. As Moishe House grows, the national office will need to maximize both efficiency and effectiveness in order to maintain consistent quality and outcomes.
- As part of building organizational capacity, Moishe House should integrate evaluation and learning activities into the work of the organization, to the extent possible. As the organization grows, national staff will need to be sophisticated consumers of data, and be able to use information related to quality and impact in order to continually improve programs and maximize effectiveness.