Achieving Diversity as a Jewish Agency Board: Part II

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Research Finding:

- Systems perform best when internal diversity reflects the diversity of the environment.
- A nonprofit with a homogenous board can suffer from debilitating tactical myopia.
- Demographic diversity serves as a symbol of the organization’s values.

CAVEATE: Diversity looks different for every organization – ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL!
WHAT COMPRISSES DIVERSITY FOR THIS CONVERSATION?

Men, Women and/or Other with differing ...

- Race
- Ethnicity
- Culture
- Sexual identity
- Disability
- Age AND
- Religion
HOW DOES BOARD DIVERSITY ADD VALUE?

- Brings multiple perspectives to the table
- Opens doors to community stakeholders
- Models inclusion to the agency’s staff
- Encourages collaboration and partnerships
- Increases organizations “fundability”
- Particularly critical in light of COVID-19 and Black Lives Matter – Diverse Board members can help translate for the Board the needs and concerns of community(ies) the agency serves
PROGRESS TOWARDS DIVERSITY: THE DATA
WHAT IS WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?

“Diversity is good. Pass it down.”
Leading with Intent (Board Source Study of 1,700 Board Chairs and Agency CEO’s) highlights a serious imbalance with regard to race and age:

- 84% of nonprofit board members reported as white and
- 83% are over the age of 40.

No data for Boards of Jewish Agencies
How do Jewish Agency Boards diversify while retaining their Jewish identity?
Most Jewish Agencies are no longer serving exclusively or even largely Jewish clientele

The demands of funders, cultural competency and positive community relations necessitates a diverse staff

Anecdotally we know that Jewish agency Boards have not diversified their members
WHAT DEFINES A JEWISH AGENCY AS “JEWISH”? 
ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL

Is it that…

- Primary funding comes from Jewish Federations, funders, donors?
- Jewish census (client and staff) is substantial in size and scope?
- Agency’s mission, vision and policies are defined in terms of Jewish values?
- Programs and services are in part or wholly designed for the Jewish community?
- Agency is branded as a Jewish Human Service Agency? AND/OR
- Agency Leadership is Jewish?
  - Board
  - CEO
WHY DIVERSIFY YOUR JEWISH BOARD?

ASK YOUR BOARD TO CONSIDER...

- Is your organization’s reputation negatively (or positively) impacted by your Board’s current composition?
- If someone were to make assumptions about your organizational values based upon your board composition what would they be likely to think?
- How well are you bringing your clients’/communities perspectives, needs, feedback and priorities into your strategic boardroom discussions?
- Do you ever feel you are making decisions without fully understanding how may affect those you serve?
Can Jewish Boards effectively diversify while retaining their Jewish identity?

Is there the danger of a “tipping point?”
HOW TO SUCCESSFULLY DIVERSIFY YOUR JEWISH BOARD: A VIEW FROM THE FIELD
Mission:
- Empower individuals from diverse communities to find employment and build careers
- Partner with employers to hire, develop and retain productive workforces

Last year:
- Connected 2,286 people with new jobs
- Partnered with 1,669 employers
- Graduated 380 people from skills training programs
- Prepared 106 students to enter college
Skills training:
- Pharmacy technician
- Nursing assistant
- Biotechnology
- Healthcare information technology
- Food service
- Hospitality
- Bank careers

Education:
- High school diploma
- English for Speakers of Other Languages
- College access
- Employer-based training for incumbent workers

Job placement:
- MassHire American Jobs Center
- Immigrants & refugees
- Individuals with disabilities
JVS Boston

$ total budget: $17,580,928

total number of clients: 17,186 served in FY19

total number of staff: ~155 FTEs

total number of board members: 34
SOCIAL JUSTICE

We remember and honor our Jewish legacy of Tikkun Olam (repair the world) and Tzedakah (justice, righteousness), always working for social justice through our words and deeds.

THE VALUE OF TZEDAKAH

Tzedakah is usually translated as charity though it is derived from the Hebrew word meaning ‘justice’ or ‘righteousness.’ Jewish Vocational Service’s particular focus on ‘skills, jobs, and careers’ is rooted in important Jewish teachings on the value of work. Maimonides writes that there are eight levels of tzedakah: and the highest level is that of a person who empowers another in finding employment and helps to break another person’s dependency and poverty to achieve independence and self-sufficiency.

THE VALUE OF TIKKUN OLAM
THE REPAIR OF THE WORLD

As Rabbi Jonathan Sacks writes, in giving meaning to the idea of Tikkun Olam, ‘As long as there is hunger, poverty, and intractable disease in the world, there is work for us to do. As long as there is sickness and suffering and pain and hate, and corruption stalks the corridors of power, as long as there is unemployment and homelessness, depression and despair, our task is not yet done, and we hear, “If we listen carefully enough, the voice of God is asking us, as he asked the first humans, “Where are you?”

THE VALUE OF LOVING A STRANGER

Jewish Vocational Service’s history of working with skills, jobs, and careers is built on a tradition of seeking to meet the needs of all people, and in particular those who are suffering the impacts of poverty. As a preamble to our concern for the needs of the poor, Rabbi Hillel said, “Do not despise the stranger, for you were once strangers in Egypt.” As a precursor to the commandment to love our neighbor, the Bible instructs us, “Love your neighbor as yourself.”
Books:
- White Fragility by Robin D’Angelo
- How to be an Antiracist by Ibram X. Kendi

Article:
- [https://libjournal.uncg.edu/ijcp/article/viewFile/249/116](https://libjournal.uncg.edu/ijcp/article/viewFile/249/116)

Podcasts:
- Unlocking W’s with Brene Brown
- Brene Brown: Interview with Ibram X. Kendi on How to be an Antiracist
- Brene Brown on Shame and Accountability

Links:
- [http://jewishtogether.org](http://jewishtogether.org) now hosts a web page with resources on racial justice
Susan Friedman, Board Dynamics Consulting
Boardynamics@gmail.com

Jane Matlaw, Chair, JVS, Boston
Jane.Matlaw@gmail.com
August 4 @ 1 p.m. EDT

Vision 2020: Unscripted, Radically Honest Conversations About Addiction - NJHSA Pillar Collaboration Award Winner (JFCS Philadelphia)

August 18 @ 1 p.m. EDT

NJHSA Best Practice Pillar Award Winner - Jewish Family and Child Service of Greater Toronto - The Transformative Journey of Building a Reimagined Supplementary Financial Assistance: Optimizing a Mutual Framework

Registration links can be found in our newsletters or on our website: https://www.networkjhlsa.org/.