

Center for Teen Engagement Community Innovation Microgrants

Inspiring Collaboration. Fueling Innovation. Expanding Jewish Teen Engagement

Overview

The Center for Jewish Teen Engagement (CTE) is launching innovation microgrant opportunities to spark creativity, strengthen collaboration, and elevate teen engagement in northern New Jersey.

These community microgrants are designed to elevate existing and innovate new experiences that bring Jewish values to life, cultivate leadership, and strengthen community connection among teens and the professionals who guide them.

[Apply Here by March 1st, 2026](#) | [Register for a Zoom Info Session Here](#)

Goals of the Innovation Grant Program

Our grants aim to:

- **Enhance collaboration and resource utilization** among teen engagement professionals and organizations.
- **Elevate and innovate to expand local teen programming**, informed by community needs and professionals.
- **Cultivate deep, meaningful relationships** among teens and teen program providers across northern New Jersey to build vibrant, inclusive, and engaging communal spaces for teens.

Community Innovation Grant Overview

This grant is open to teens, adults and organizations in the Jewish Federation's catchment area (Bergen, Hudson and Wayne).

Community Grants can either **elevate an existing initiative** to strengthen an existing program by enhancing content or expanding reach, OR **pilot a new initiative** using your unique expertise in the community.

Apply for up to \$2,500 to bring innovation and experimentation into an existing program—or to pilot something new to northern New Jersey.

Eligibility Guidelines

Who Can Apply

- Jewish organizations, schools, synagogues, JCCs, camps, and community groups that serve the Jewish Federation's catchment area (Bergen, Hudson and Wayne).
- Individual community members who are teens (7th -12th grade) or working with teens in the catchment area.
 - Teens are encouraged to apply, with the support of an adult mentor (parent, youth advisor, teacher, etc.) included in their application.

Who Cannot Apply

- Organizations operating outside the Jewish Federation's catchment area that do not have a local partner.
- Programs already fully funded by another grant or organizational budget for the same scope.
- Projects that do not primarily serve Jewish teens (grades 7–12).

Program Requirements

Your program must:

- Either **elevate an existing program** OR **create something new**.
- Engage **at least 10 participants** — teens (7th – 12th grade), parents of teens, or teen-facing professionals.
- Meet **at least three times** by December 1, 2026.
 - If your initiative is an immersive experience like a Shabbaton, a pre-event and post-event touchpoint can count towards the three meetings.
- Fall into **one of the seven Impact Categories**:
 - Relationship with Israel
 - Jewish Peoplehood
 - Leadership Training
 - Mental Wellness and Resilience
 - Combatting Antisemitism
 - Arts & Culture
 - Volunteerism & Social Action
- Clearly articulate what makes your program Jewish and how it **fosters meaningful Jewish engagement**.
- Be **welcoming and accessible** to Jews of all backgrounds, identities, genders, and sexual orientations.

Priority will be given to initiatives that partner across communities, institutions, or geography and have potential to be scaled in other communities.

All grantees are required to participate in:

- One Program Training (prior to implementation) by the CTE – a zoom call for all grantees upon receiving the grant.
- Two Coaching Sessions with a member of the CTE team during the grant period – A time to check-in, work through any challenges you may be facing, and have the CTE support you and your initiative.

Funding Overview

Funds may be used for:

- Program supplies, materials or curriculum
- Honoraria for facilitators, artists, or speakers
- Marketing, outreach, and communication
- Modest food directly tied to program delivery
- Transportation or venue costs

Note: All expenses must be accompanied by a receipt or invoice for reimbursement.

Funds may not be used for:

- Salaries or general operating expenses
- Capital or building improvements
- International travel

Reporting & Disbursement

- Projects must be completed by December 1, 2026.
- Grantees will be required to submit a mid-cycle report (June 2026) and a final report by December 15, 2026.
- Report will be submitted by the Lead Applicant (the person who submits the application and receives the grant funding) and approved by all partners (when applicable).
- Grantees will be required to submit evidence of their project in written, photo, and/or video form.
- Grantees will be required to submit participant contact information along with their reports.
- Payment will be issued upon submission of the final report and receipts.

Support Provided

Grantees will receive:

- Program training before project launch
- Two coaching check-ins during the program year
- Visibility for their programs through CTE communications and community networks

Application

[Submit Online Application by March 1st](#)

We encourage you to *review the application questions in advance of submitting*

Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be assessed by the Center for Teen Engagement Microgrant Committee based on:

- Innovation and/or elevation
- Collaboration and partnership across communities, institutions, or geography
- Impact on Jewish teens (grades 7–12)
- Meaningful Jewish engagement
- Feasibility and clarity of plan
- Potential for turnkeying and replication across northern New Jersey

Timeline

Application Opens	December 5, 2025
Applications Due	March 1, 2026
Award Notification	April 1, 2026
Program Lead Training (Zoom)	TBD
Mid-Cycle Check In	September 2026
Final Report Due	December 15, 2026

Impact Categories and Examples

Applicants must select **one primary impact category** (and may choose an optional secondary category). These categories reflect the Center for Teen Engagement’s priorities for meaningful, innovative Jewish teen engagement in northern New Jersey—rooted in Jewish values, partnership, and teen leadership.

Like an example given below?

Apply to implement it yourself or use it as inspiration for your own idea!

1. Relationship with Israel

Foster strong and authentic, multidimensional relationships with Israel—its people, culture and language. Programs in this category engage teens with Israel and its significance in Jewish life today.

Examples:

- Teens planning and running an Israel Fair at a local synagogue or JCC
- A Rabbi, parent, or educator offering a discussion group series on Israeli current events at a local café
- A teen-led dialogue series exploring diverse perspectives on Israel and Jewish identity
- An Israel arts or music exchange between NNJ teens and Israeli peers

2. Jewish Peoplehood

Strengthen the sense of shared Jewish connection across generations, geography, and identity. Programs in this category celebrate the diversity and unity of the Jewish people while deepening participants’ sense of belonging to a global Jewish family and shared responsibility for one another.

Examples:

- A cooking series where teens and grandparents share family recipes and heritage stories in a home or in a restaurant
- A community-wide Havdalah series bringing together different youth groups from across the region
- Cross-denominational teen learning circles exploring Jewish rituals and values

3. Leadership Training

Develop and empower teen leaders to act with purpose, confidence, and Jewish grounding in their communities. Programs in this category help teens cultivate skills, reflect on their values, and lead with vision.

Examples:

- A regional Shabbaton training madrichim (teen assistants) across multiple religious schools
- A “Jewish Values in Action” mentorship circle where Jewish adult volunteers—such as lawyers, professors, social workers, HR executives, scientists, etc.—meet with teens to explore how Jewish teachings guide their professional and volunteer service
- A public speaking series helping teens share their “Jewish story”

4. Mental Wellness & Resilience

Promote emotional well-being, resilience, and spiritual grounding through Jewish wisdom, community, and care. Programs in this category integrate Jewish learning and wellness practices to support thriving teens and families.

Examples:

- A *mindfulness and Jewish meditation* group for teens
- A *parent-teen* series on communication
- A Mental Health First Aid training for parents, educators, and/or teens (must be provided by an accredited professional)

5. Combatting Antisemitism

Empower teens and communities to recognize and respond to antisemitism through education, creativity, and positive Jewish expression. Programs in this category strengthen Jewish pride, build confidence and literacy around antisemitism, and foster allyship and understanding across communities.

Examples:

- A teen-led campaign promoting positive and visible expressions of Jewish identity on social media
- An art project in the public such as a mural in a town square that tells a story of Jewish resilience and pride in the community
- A collaborative initiative with local churches, mosques, or schools—such as a “Faith & Friendship Teen Summit”—where teens from different backgrounds share experiences of bias and build joint community action projects
- A series on Jewish identity development with a project where teens speak in their high schools about their Judaism during Jewish American Heritage Month

6. Arts & Culture

Celebrate Jewish identity, heritage, and imagination through creative expression. Projects in this category use the arts to build connection, reflection, and innovation—empowering teens to explore what it means to be Jewish today through music, movement, storytelling, and hands-on creativity.

Examples:

- A monthly podcast exploring Jewish identity and contemporary issues
- A monthly challah-baking circle with friends on Friday afternoons
- An Israeli dance group

7. Volunteerism & Social Action

Inspire teens to live out Jewish values through acts of service, civic engagement, and community leadership. Projects in this category empower young people to take responsibility for repairing the world (*tikkun olam*), addressing local and global needs through sustained action, empathy, and partnership.

Examples:

- A teen-organized “Midnight Run”
- An intergenerational service initiative pairing teens with older adults for tech help, companionship, and shared Jewish learning
- A sustained social action fellowship where teens identify a community issue and design a Jewish values–based response in collaboration with local nonprofits

If you have any questions, please contact Sara Miriam Liben at SaraM@jfnnj.org



KAPLEN JCC on the Palisades

