

Community Vision, Sustainable Action

Jewish Federation of Ottawa Strategic Plan 2025-2030





July 2025

Dear Friends,

We are proud to share with you the Jewish Federation of Ottawa's 2025–2030 Strategic Plan. It is a bold, forward-looking roadmap shaped by the voices of more than 1,000 community members.

This is a pivotal moment for Jewish Ottawa. Our community is growing more diverse, more geographically dispersed, and is navigating rising antisemitism, and shifting demographics. At the same time, we are driven by remarkable strengths: dedicated leaders and volunteers, strong interfaith and civic partnerships, a deep commitment to Jewish life, and an unwavering belief in our shared future.

Our new plan responds to this moment. It reflects a clear evolution in Federation's role from traditional funder to **catalyst, convener, and connector**. It is grounded in the belief that when we work together, we can achieve more together.

Over the next five years, we will focus our work through four strategic priorities:

1. **Sharpening our value proposition:** clearly articulating and demonstrating Federation's role and increasing our visibility through stronger communications, while deepening relationships, collaboration, and community impact.
2. **Growing a culture of giving:** expanding philanthropy beyond financial gifts to include leadership, time, and service at every stage of life.
3. **Providing cohesive leadership in times of challenge:** investing in local advocacy, Israel engagement, and collaborative sector councils to address issues like antisemitism, aging, and essential Jewish services.
4. **Strengthening our internal operations and culture:** modernizing systems, investing in staff, and ensuring our organization reflects the excellence our community deserves.

Guided by core principles — a commitment to Jewish peoplehood, Israel, and Zionism, relationship-based engagement, collective responsibility, and conscious stewardship — this plan is both ambitious and achievable.

Most importantly, it is rooted in partnership. This strategy belongs to all of us. Together, we will build a vibrant, secure, and flourishing multigenerational Jewish community in Ottawa, one that inspires people to connect, invest, and build their lives here.

We are excited for the journey ahead and grateful to walk it with you.

With gratitude,

Danya Vered, Board Chair

Adam Silver, President and CEO

Executive Summary

The Jewish Federation of Ottawa stands at a pivotal moment of transformation. Founded in the 1930s as Va'ad Ha'Ir, and evolving into the Jewish Federation of Ottawa in 2005, the organization has served as the cornerstone of Jewish communal life for over 90 years. Today's increasingly diverse and geographically dispersed community, coupled with rising antisemitism and changing demographics, demands a strategic evolution in how Federation fulfills its mission.

Through an extensive six-phase planning process launched in December 2024, over one thousand community voices across 10 stakeholder groups provided input that shaped this comprehensive five-year strategic plan. The 2021 Canada Census data and organizational analysis revealed both significant opportunities and critical challenges facing Jewish Ottawa.

The strategic planning process identified four critical populations requiring enhanced engagement:

- Intermarried couples and families constitute 50% of coupled households.
- Newcomers moving to Ottawa, particularly Israeli immigrants and Former Soviet Union Jews concentrated in specific neighbourhoods
- Seniors (65+), representing 23.2% of the population and projected to grow to 3,744 by 2031
- Young and middle adults (25-65), who represent the largest cohorts but receive disproportionately small funding allocations

Mission: We strengthen and amplify Jewish life in Ottawa through coordinated community building strategy and philanthropic efforts that invest in our shared future. We empower community members to find authentic connections to Jewish life while uniting diverse voices and organizations to amplify priorities and influence.

Vision: A vibrant, secure, and flourishing multigenerational Jewish community that fosters belonging in our diverse community and inspires people to connect, invest, and build their lives in Ottawa.

The strategy is anchored by four guiding principles that inform the organization's direction and culture to ensure alignment and cohesion as we implement our strategy over the next five years:

Commitment to Jewish Peoplehood and Zionism
People and Relationships Build Exceptional Community
Shared Responsibility Enables Collective Impact
Thoughtful Stewardship Connecting Legacy and Next-Generation Members

Executive Summary

Four interconnected strategic priorities provide a clear guide for Federation's transformation journey through its work over the next five years. These priorities direct Federation's evolution from its traditional role to becoming a catalyst, convener, and connector for Jewish communal life in Ottawa, while addressing critical challenges like demographic shifts, engagement gaps, and the need for modernized operations. These interconnected strategic priorities work towards a holistic plan and roadmap for building a more inclusive, vibrant, and sustainable Jewish community in Canada's capital.

- 1. Sharpening our distinct value proposition: Enabling our community to achieve more together.** Federation will operate in three complementary modes: Catalyze (drive initiatives forward), Convene (bring stakeholders together), and Connect (link individuals to resources) where critical components include updating funding frameworks, adopting people-centred community building, and improving visibility through enhanced communications.
- 2. Developing a culture of giving that resonates with and is adopted by all ages and stages.** The Federation will expand the giving pipeline beyond financial donations to include time and services, develop tailored leadership experiences, and test new giving platforms that resonate with younger generations while building long-term philanthropic relationships.
- 3. Providing cohesive leadership and responsive support against external threats.** Federation will implement consistent data collection and analysis, establish three sector councils (Aging and Vitality, Essential Jewish Services, and Grow Jewish Ottawa), and develop local advocacy and Israel engagement capabilities to combat antisemitism and strengthen community resilience.
- 4. Improving organizational operations and culture to transform Federation from good to great in order to best serve our community.** Federation will update organizational structure and accountability measures, reduce departmental silos, and conduct comprehensive HR and operations audits to attract top talent and improve service delivery.

Success will be measured through clear metrics including stakeholder ability to articulate Federation's mission, improved organizational collaboration, expanded giving participation across all demographics, enhanced Jewish community infrastructure, and positive employee experience indicators. The plan includes annual community impact reports, semi-annual reviews, and regular constituent feedback mechanisms. By addressing demographic shifts, modernizing operations, and fostering inclusive engagement, Federation will strengthen its role in building a vibrant, secure, and flourishing Jewish community that attracts and retains families, donors, and allies in Canada's capital.

Guiding Principles

Our approach is guided by the following principles. They inform the organization's direction and culture to ensure alignment and cohesion as we implement our strategy over the next five years.



A Commitment to Jewish Peoplehood

Jewish peoplehood is a commitment to identity, not a concept. We honour the diverse expressions of Jewish identity and celebrate the bonds that unite Jews across geographical, cultural, ideological, and spiritual boundaries. Our commitment to, and promotion of, Jewish peoplehood calls us to nurture meaningful connections among Jews everywhere: in our local community, in Israel, and around the world. We build real connections with Jewish people and show up for one another, especially in times of crisis or need. We are committed to Zionism — the Jewish people's right to self-determination in our ancestral homeland, and we strive to establish a vibrant and multifaceted connection between Ottawa and Israel.




People & Relationships Build An Exceptional Community

We build an exceptional Jewish community by cultivating meaningful relationships at every level. Through intentional, personal connections, we underscore trust and create spaces where individuals feel authentically seen, valued, and embraced as essential parts of our shared story. Our success is measured by the depth of relationships formed, the sense of belonging nurtured, and the commitment of investors who see themselves as long-term co-creators of our shared Jewish future.



Shared Responsibility Enables Collective Impact

Our impact depends on how we show up for one another. We recognize that true community flourishes when people shift from participants to invested and dedicated stakeholders, contributing their unique gifts, wisdom, and resources to our collective growth. We are responsible for one another — our strength comes from shared purpose, commitment, mutual support, and amplifying our collective voice. Acts of *chesed*, *tzedakah*, and care for one another animate the Jewish teaching that "all Jews are responsible for one another." *Kol Yisrael arevim zeh lazeh*.



Thoughtful Stewardship Connects Legacy & Next Generation Community Members

We are temporary caretakers of enduring community assets — both tangible and intangible. We approach our mission with great care and intention. We are deeply committed to practices that both benefit our community's present needs and safeguards for future generations.

Strategic Priorities

Priority #1 Sharpening our distinct value proposition: Enabling our community to achieve more together.

Our community is strongest when our local organizations can focus on what they do best with strong coordination and support. Federation can catalyze and lead the community by providing an overarching vision with foresight, thought leadership, and essential resources. We can uniquely convene leaders, members, and donors to work collaboratively, and we also can serve as an important connector that links people to resources and opportunities.

IF WE demonstrate value with focused efforts to position Federation as the organizational leader providing vision and governing strategy for the community...

THEN WE improve engagement through Jewish experiences, service delivery, transparency, and access with coordinated collaboration.

WE WILL BE SUCCESSFUL WHEN:

- Stakeholders and community members can easily and consistently articulate the mission and value of Federation.
- Partner organizations report improved collaboration, support, and growth.
- Clear Collaboration Agreements and ongoing management guidelines nurture organizational relationships with community agencies, organizations, partners, and members to leverage funding through Federation to initiate and scale Jewish engagement programs and community services collaboratively.
- Our community sees themselves in the stories told through Federation's website and communications, communicates pride in the efforts, and takes further action to engage, contribute, donate, and more.





Priority #2 Developing a culture of giving that resonates with and is adopted by all ages and stages

Our community's future depends on developing volunteers and philanthropists, across all prioritized populations, who understand the power of shared responsibility for collective impact. Meaningful and generous contributions come in many forms including (but not limited to) financial giving, and our community's strength is built on diverse forms of participation. We want to create a culture where many forms of giving and contributing to our community are encouraged and valued so that giving is an easy, accessible, and obvious practice across our diverse community. For a long-term giving strategy, we wish to invest in building up community members who will lead their networks in contributing to the Federation in service of Jewish Ottawa's vitality by combining leadership and philanthropy efforts.

IF WE organize, sustain, and steward a multigenerational network committed to a shared responsibility for advancing Jewish life in Ottawa through giving time and funds...

THEN WE create a multifaceted base of community members who are deeply and actively committed to the practice of consistent giving to support the Jewish community.

WE WILL BE SUCCESSFUL WHEN:

- We can quantify and measure gifts and contributions beyond financial donations and demonstrate powerful impact through Federation's Big Picture Giving approach.
- The demand for leadership cohorts grows to serve many of the affinity groups and populations within our diverse community.
- Community institutions report strong volunteer leadership who are graduates of the Development Department's Leadership Advancement Cohorts.
- New digital giving platforms and creative giving opportunities connect with younger generations and spark new long-term giving relationships through Federation.





Priority #3 Providing cohesive leadership and responsive support against external threats.

Addressing complex community challenges and identifying opportunities requires data analysis and high-level leadership coordination that Federation is best suited to provide. To ensure that Ottawa is a vibrant and attractive destination and a hub for Jewish life, we must actively work with community leaders to strengthen infrastructure on an ongoing basis and advance the Jewish community's interests as a unifying voice in the broader Ottawa community. Federation can lead Ottawa's Jewish ecosystem by fostering unity and strength to counteract isolation from the broader Ottawa community, and address complex problems through collective action that safeguards and promotes a vibrant Jewish community.

IF WE facilitate inter-institutional coordination to meet the needs of our neighbourhoods that will yield solutions that no one institution can realize...

THEN WE create the conditions where Jewish Ottawa is an attractive place for people to call home, transforming potential into measurable progress by connecting the dots others cannot see, convening the partnerships that others cannot facilitate, and creating an ecosystem of shared success and growth.

WE WILL BE SUCCESSFUL WHEN:

- Federation has a robust CRM that provides quantifiable ways to guide coordinated efforts.
- There is a community strategy to address the growing aging Jewish senior population with best practices and a model of excellence in community collaboration.
- Stable, affordable, and high quality Kashrut opportunities enable social and business opportunities to abound in different neighbourhoods.
- Innovative businesses and enterprises bring new people to Ottawa to build their lives, as well as reach Jewish people living in neighbourhoods far away from the Jewish community's campus.
- Community members speak about, fundraise, and advocate for Israel based on personal experiences with Israelis and allies of Israel — regardless of whether they have ever travelled to Israel.





Priority #4 Improving organizational operations and culture to transform Federation from good to great in order to best serve our community.

Our ability to fulfill our mission and vision begins with and depends on internal excellence. Modernized systems, methodical structure, employee retention, and a relationship-based culture are foundations for optimal community impact.

IF WE focus on internal organizational coordination that directly improves external relations through a refreshed culture that prioritizes communication, reduces silos and builds team cohesion...

THEN WE increase employee engagement, retention and employment satisfaction, and foster a workplace reputation that attracts top talent to deliver excellent support and services to our community.

WE WILL BE SUCCESSFUL WHEN:

- Employees report positive workplace experiences attributed to clear organizational structure, role clarity, supervision, staff development, and predictable patterns.
- Increased efficiency and trust are reported internally and by external stakeholders with particular mention of improvements through updated systems, processes and technology to streamline operations and effectiveness and improve transparency.
- Community leaders and members consistently report excellent interaction experiences with the Federation resulting in stronger relationships, deeper trust and increased giving.



OVERVIEW OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

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A strategic planning process was initiated in December 2024 with Federation’s Board, committee members, and staff to establish the organizational vision and develop a comprehensive five-year strategic plan. The purpose was to address the evolving needs of our community, including funding landscapes and service requirements. The overarching goal was equitable access and full inclusion for all members of the Jewish community delivered through a strategic plan that would guide the Jewish Federation’s initiatives into the future.

Through a six-phase process, over 1000 voices from 10 stakeholder groups in our community were engaged through digital and in-person community consultations to understand the needs, expectations and motivations of community members. The results of the first four phases generated important insights on the community’s strengths, challenges, needs and opportunities.



EARLY FINDINGS

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Synthesizing these insights with the results of the 2021 Canada Census for the Ottawa Jewish community, along with the review of internal organizational documents, a SWOT analysis was generated to inform a preliminary strategic framework.

This framework was tested and validated through community feedback loops in the form of in-person presentations and workshops. Phases five and six led to the culmination of the strategy reflecting a commitment and dedication to continued investment in and development of the Ottawa Jewish community as it strives to grow as a vibrant and sustainable hub of Jewish life.

STRENGTHS

Federation has a strong established base of committed community members, effective coordination capacity as a central body, and an engaged core of volunteers and participants.

WEAKNESSES

The organization faces challenges with consistent engagement and service delivery across all demographics and geography, effective communication of the organization's role and value, and cooperation between various institutions.

OPPORTUNITIES

Significant potential for strategic leadership development can further advance community institutions and provide meaningful engagement for adults. More collaboration and partnerships among core mission-aligned institutions can meet community needs and develop diverse donor engagement strategies for different demographics. There are opportunities to expand the communication of how Federation is effective in leading, convening, and connecting the community.

THREATS

The community faces challenges due to evolving demographic changes including:

- An aging population
- Geographic dispersal
- Limited contact with families with one Jewish parent
- Fluctuating religious infrastructure that limits observant members of the community from settling in Ottawa long-term
- Transient patterns due to university and government-driven employment
- Outdated funding frameworks that do not reflect current demographic needs
- Security threats related to antisemitism

MEASURING OUR IMPACT

We are committed to transparency and accountability in measuring progress toward our strategic goals. Our evaluation framework includes:

- An annual community impact report to provide a comprehensive assessment of progress on key metrics shared with all stakeholders
- A review process: Semi-annual check-ins with community institutions and quarterly check-ins for internal teams to track initiative progress
- A partnership accountability framework: Clear metrics and expectations for all collaborative funding relationships
- Constituent feedback mechanisms: Regular opportunities for community input on progress and priorities. Examples include surveys, Town Hall gatherings, and Impact Showcases.

CONCLUSION

By addressing demographic shifts, modernizing operations, and fostering inclusive engagement, Federation will strengthen its role in building a vibrant, secure, and flourishing Jewish community that attracts and retains families, donors, and allies in Canada's capital.





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Strategic Plan 2025-2030**