

2018 Survey on JDC Success, Part 1: Summary of Results

An ad hoc Committee was formed at the end of the Jewish Deaf Congress (JDC) conference, August 2017, to work on a strategic plan to revive, revitalize and update JDC to meet the needs of modern-day Jewish Deaf Americans. The Committee members decided to seek input from stakeholders from all over the United States, as well as from some in Canada. In May 2018, the Committee disseminated a survey to inform JDC's strategic action plan on how to transform and strengthen JDC. The survey would be sent in two parts: 1) to determine the pulse of Jewish Deaf Americans regarding JDC, its purpose, its priorities and ideas for the future, and then 2) to revitalize JDC by determining current directions including possibly restructuring it. Part two of the survey will occur by the end of summer 2018.

The first part of the survey was posted on Survey Monkey and emailed to the JDC mailing list, consisting of participants in recent JDC conferences, local Jewish Deaf groups who were encouraged to share this within their groups, and some individuals. It was also posted on the JDC page in Facebook. Approximately 6 weeks were given for responses. 79 people responded to the survey. It should also be noted that some people did not know about the survey.

Below is an executive summary of the Part 1 survey results.

Respondent Demographics: 68% said they were Deaf or hard of hearing. 50% were between 51-70 years old; 28% were 70+; 19% were 31-50; and 3% were under 30 years old. 50% indicated that they were part of a local Jewish Deaf group and that they met several times a year.

Key Points: JDC needs to attract more people under age 50, especially, in the 21-35 age range. Also, there are isolated people who are not members of a Jewish Deaf group, whose the national conference as an opportunity to meet other Jewish Deaf people.

JDC Purpose: Given a summary of JDC's purpose as stated in its bylaws, 54% of the respondents believed that the purpose as is was satisfactory while 46% felt the purpose should be updated, expanded and made more specific.

Key Points: Given that just a little over half of the responders expressed support of the current mission, JDC should maintain its purpose and update it to meet current and future needs and desires of Jewish Deaf Americans.

JDC's Strengths: This was an open-ended question: nearly 75% of the respondents wrote comments. The responses were grouped around some common themes, in ranked order:

- Conferences/Programming
- Gathering, Serving the Community
- Valued for Its History
- About 10% stated they were clueless.

Key Points: JDC

- is viewed and valued as a “home” for Jewish Deaf Americans to meet, learn, socialize, and network in a Deaf-friendly environment;
- unites the Jewish Deaf community of North America;
- provides full visual language access to Jewish life and is Deaf-centered.

As JDC is the only such organization to bring together Jewish Deaf adults together, it serves an important need. JDC should make every effort to continue providing these conferences.

JDC’s Weaknesses: This was an open-ended question: nearly 75% of the respondents shared their thoughts. The common themes in the responses, in ranked order, were:

- Lack of Communications/Marketing/Outreach/Newsletters/Visibility
- Need Volunteers/Leadership/Voting process
- Membership (including Youth and Singles)
- Operations/Processes
- Diversity/Values Conflicts

Others commented on the need for funds, educational programs, and advocacy. Several mentioned the dichotomy between Orthodox and more liberal groups, particularly concerning food during the conference.

Key Points: JDC needs to improve its communications to the JDC membership and develop better relations with external groups. JDC needs to focus on developing future leaders and bringing in more members. As JDC desires to be inclusive of different Jewish perspectives and practices, it needs to examine the best ways to include and accommodate them.

Desired Information from JDC: For the question: “What should JDC provide information about?” respondents could check one or more checkboxes.

Topic	Percent Selecting Topic	Rank
Judaism and Deaf people	80.6	1
Improving access to Jewish programs/services	70.8	2
Judaism and Jewish traditions	69.4	3
How to improve your local Jewish Deaf group	38.9	4
History	37.5	5
Preparing for Mitzvah at any age	30.6	6
How to organize your local Jewish Deaf group	29.2	7
Other (Unspecified)	23.6	8
Family/Children	20.8	9
Women	11.1	10

Key Points: The first and third choices relate to programming topics. JDC should find ways to provide this information in Deaf-friendly format(s). The second choice involves JDC advocacy to gain more access to and support from Jewish non-Deaf organizations.

Near-Term Issues: For this open-ended question, “What are the issues you think JDC will face in the next 2-3 years?”, 70 respondents wrote their answers. Common themes emerged, in ranked order, as follows:

- Membership/Youth, Families, Seniors: Increasing Memberships
- Volunteers/Leadership/Motivation
- Loss of Jewish Identity/Mainstream, Assimilation/Apathy

- Conference/Targeted Programming/Location/Cost
- Finances/Grants/Sponsors/Collaborations
- Diversity/Values Conflicts: 3 responses
 - Rhetorical questions were raised – should JDC be a neutral Jewish Platform? “We are Jews – One Label – One Group. We are not Orthodox, Conservative, Reform. A name change along with a strong emphasis on socialization and fun Jewish learning. JDC needs to focus on attracting the many Deaf Jews – young and old – who consider themselves Jewish but non-practicing.” Should JDC try to “unify Reform/Conservative/Orthodox Jewish Deaf at conferences?”
- Miscellaneous comments touched upon technology, Jewish Birthright, 1-2 Deaf accessible camps, access (on site and on line) for Deaf youth to be bat/bar mitzvahed, educating rabbis about our needs, JDC restructuring, self-exploration as a Jew.

Key Points: JDC will address these issues while developing the JDC Strategic Plan/Goals that will be discussed/prioritized during the next JDC conference.

JDC Near-Term Priorities: “What should JDC’s top 3 priorities be from now until 2020?” elicited 68 responses.

Priority	Percent Selecting Priority	Rank
Communications and info to members	55.7	1
Conferences and events	50.0	2
Fundraising, donations, and grants	44.3	3
Advocacy and networking with other Jewish orgs	44.3	3
Networking among local groups and members	42.9	4
Organizational structure and management	37.4	5
Educational programs	27.1	6
Other (unspecified)	17.1	7
Volunteers training	14.3	8

Key Points: JDC will develop ways to communicate with the members. JDC will look at conference locations and host organizations for the next JDC conference. The next two priorities involve working with and getting money from other Jewish organizations, and identifying these organizations and developing relations will be one of JDC’s longer-term goals.

Respondents’ Interests: 66 respondents shared their interests that JDC could provide or they could help provide:

Topic	Percent Selecting Topic	Rank
JDC updates (3 x year or more)	64.7	1
JDC conferences (1 x every 2-4 years)	45.6	2
Communications/Social	44.1	3
Networking	36.8	4
Volunteering to help JDC on a committee	26.5	5
Education	22.1	6
JDC presenters	17.6	7
Membership	16.2	8
Technology and website	16.2	8
Other (unspecified)	16.2	8

JDC training modules	14.7	9
Fundraising	10.3	10

Key Points: Again, the members indicated high interest in getting communications from JDC at a minimum of 3 times a year and were interested in JDC conferences. It is also good that some want to help with networking, programming and volunteering.

Comments? Ideas? Issues? Please do share with us.

Watch for Part 2 of the survey on JDC structure and operations.

Please do add names of Jewish Deaf people who would be interested in getting information and providing input.

Thank you.

Compiled by Iris Mars and Roz Rosen
6/30/18