

PURPOSE

The Wexner Field Fellowship invests in promising Jewish professionals to enable them to exercise leadership on the change they want to make in the Jewish community. By providing a signature “Wexner experience” (described below) to approximately 15 diverse, established Jewish nonprofit professionals in each cohort, the Field Fellowship increases connections across the Jewish professional world and contributes to a pipeline of quality Jewish leadership.

PRESENTING CHALLENGES

The field lacks a strong leadership pipeline: professionals are not sufficiently nurtured, trained, and elevated.

Insufficient opportunities for professional development for existing professionals.

Professionals are in positions they were not specifically trained for.

Professionals encounter challenging governance issues,

as they are often members of the community where they work.

The field lacks clear career advancement trajectories.

Individuals move between organizations quite frequently.

Women are at a systemic disadvantage.

Professionals can be siloed by movements, sub-fields, or geography.

Not enough opportunity for collaboration.

Professionals are stretched too thin.

Burnout is a major concern.

COVID-19 presents unique challenges. While the Field Fellowship is not designed to address this crisis, the Theory of Change provides a framework for fellows to find support and growth during this crisis and its aftermath.

ASSUMPTIONS

Fidelity to Jewish professional life is more important than to any individual organization and ultimately benefits the Jewish professional ecosystem.

Fellows possess enough self-awareness to identify their professional and self-leadership challenges.

Ideal candidate appears to have at least 7–15 years of work experience.

Fellows are interested in growing personally and professionally and are ready to work effectively with a coach.

Individual coaching is an effective way of helping leaders achieve their professional goals, identify additional growth areas, and develop essential leadership dispositions.

A cohort experience is essential for personal growth and network building.

Adaptive leadership is an underlying educational philosophy of the Wexner Foundation and is best learned experientially.

Jewish learning can take multiple forms, and it is important for Jewish professionals to incorporate Jewish learning into their leadership.

Alumni engagement is a valuable pathway to ongoing networking and collegial support.

CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

Wexner Foundation’s reputation attracts a robust pool of applicants who are prepared to invest the required time for participation.

Customized professional development in a Jewish context is compelling.

Full-time professionals are eager to take part but need a different structure than the Graduate Fellowship. The Field Fellowship represents an additional opportunity for more Jewish communal professionals to engage with the Wexner Foundation.

Quality professional development programs are expensive/out of reach for some.

Field Fellows are busy professionals, their time is at a premium.

Fellows may be unsure of their commitment to the field during and past this time frame. Some professionals are not necessarily committed to serving the Jewish community in a professional capacity for the long term.

STRATEGIES

Intentional Recruitment

- Recruit and select mature group of committed, emotionally intelligent, Jewish professionals

Cohort Learning

- Teach adaptive leadership theory and core Wexner values through semi-annual institutes
- Set of evolving leadership modules
- Create culture of learning
- Leverage the cohort experience as a living laboratory

Individualized Learning

- Professional coaching
- Personalized Jewish learning
- Fellow-identified Professional Development opportunities

Access to Wexner Staff and Alumni Network

- Wexnet and Affinity Groups
- Check-ins with Wexner staff

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

WITHIN THE COURSE OF THE FELLOWSHIP

BUILDING A DIVERSE NETWORK

Fellows are challenged to rethink their ideas based on exposure to diverse perspectives.

Fellows become better listeners.

Fellows enhance their appreciation for Jewish diversity.

Fellows identify a broader professional network to turn to for guidance and collegial support.

Fellows leverage the reputation and resources of the Wexner Foundation alumni community.

CAREER TRAJECTORY

Fellows commit to serving the Jewish community as professionals.

Fellows become aware of new leadership opportunities/horizons.

Fellows have a more articulated vision for how they will contribute to the field.

EXERCISING LEADERSHIP FOR CHANGE

Fellows see themselves as change agents.

Fellows take more risks, feel empowered to experiment with new skills and tools.

EXERCISING LEADERSHIP JEWISHLY

Fellows recognize the value of Jewish learning in Jewish professional life.

Fellows find personal meaning in Jewish learning.

FACING CHALLENGES

Fellows learn to disagree in a manner that exemplifies the principles of civil discourse.

Fellows are more comfortable facilitating difficult conversations in the workplace.

Fellows diagnose underlying causes for leadership challenges and determine if and how to intervene.

SELF AWARENESS/SELF COACHING

Fellows learn new conceptions of leadership.

Fellows develop confidence to experiment with these models of leadership.

Fellows are more self-aware.

Fellows are more mindful of the effect of their presence in a group setting.

Fellows are more intentional and skillful about how they exercise leadership.

Fellows possess an enhanced toolbox (i.e. language, skills, dispositions) to articulate and execute upon their professional vision.

Fellows are able to tell their personal/organizational narrative to effect change.

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

3–15 YEARS POST-FELLOWSHIP

BUILDING A DIVERSE NETWORK

Alumni cultivate relationships across the diverse Jewish communal landscape/ecosystem.

Alumni foster collaboration and partnerships with one another (including hiring each other).

Alumni actively participate in and contribute to Wexner alumni community.

CAREER TRAJECTORY

Alumni stay working as professionals in Jewish communal organizations in North America.

Alumni advance their careers either at their organization or elsewhere.

EXERCISING LEADERSHIP FOR CHANGE

Alumni understand the inevitability of change and their ability to effect it.

Alumni are strategic about how they create change.

Alumni can tolerate the discomfort that comes with change and exhibit the capacity to endure the ups and downs of the process of change.

EXERCISING LEADERSHIP JEWISHLY

Alumni routinely use Jewish values and wisdom in their leadership.

Alumni develop /enhance the habit of ongoing Jewish learning to support their professional practice.

FACING CHALLENGES

Alumni exemplify a strong sense of optimism about the efficacy of their goals, organizations, and the Jewish world.

Alumni are resilient in the face of setbacks and failure.

SELF AWARENESS/SELF COACHING

Alumni exercise leadership at or above a level that meets the potential they set for themselves.

Alumni are goal-oriented and persistent.

Alumni have a sense of personal balance and satisfaction in their professional career.

Alumni exemplify Wexner’s leadership values and attribute their leadership excellence in this regard to the Wexner Field Fellowship.

FOR THE FIELD:

Professional development is prioritized at organizations where Fellows exercise leadership or are in leadership positions.

Jewish professionals feel more valued as more professional development opportunities are available.

Organizations where Fellows are working are strengthened (leaders develop their staff, increased staff retention), making the field at large stronger.

Field will be better poised to handle challenges, change, and diversity.