



Sustaining the Surge

March 2026



Check In

What is one learning from your audit report that led to action?

What other data is informing your planning process?



Surge Case Studies



Review: Top line themes

1. Informal + Grassroots Engagement
2. Relational Engagement
3. Life-Stage Specificity

Two target Surge groups:

- Already engaged who want to engage *more*
- Under-engaged who need *entry points*

Case Examples



Participating Organizations:

At the Well

Boulder JCC

Coastal Roots Farm

DCJCC

Hadar

Jewish Federation of Kansas City

One Table

Tech Tribe

Shomer Collective

Silverstein Base Chicago

Each case report includes:

- Organizational snapshot
- Post-10/7 response
- Sustaining strategies
- Replicable method for Federations and communal institutions



Key Learnings

1. Crisis Revealed Existing Strength
2. Agency & Ownership Drive Participation Retention
3. Peer Leadership Enables Scalable Growth
4. Lowering Barriers Expands the Top of the Engagement Funnel
5. Repeatable Rhythms Outperform One-Off Events
6. Substance Matters
7. Early Engagement Must Feel Non-Transactional



Crisis Revealed Existing Strength

*“Our model worked before October 7; the moment
intensified demand for
what we were already doing well.”*

For those that did experience an uptick in participation post 10/7, they were able to double down on what was already working in their model and make tweaks to accommodate the increase in participation.



Agency & Ownership Drive Participant Retention

When participants share the experience themselves, engagement becomes personally meaningful and repeatable.

Sustained engagement is related to:

- Self-defined Jewish expression
- Peer-hosted gatherings
- Distributed leadership
- Movement from participant to leader

Peer Leadership Enables Scalable Growth



When participants are empowered to convene others, engagement spreads through trusted networks rather than relying solely on staff. This allows growth without sacrificing intimacy.

Distributing relational ownership allows engagement to expand through networks rather than through larger events, preserving intimacy while increasing reach.



Lowering Barriers Expands the Top of the Engagement Funnel

Organizations that sustained growth **intentionally** reduced:

- Financial friction
- Geographic friction
- Insider language
- Cultural expectations



Repeatable Rhythms Outperform One- Off Events

Small cohorts, home-based gatherings, workplace touchpoints, and recurring programs consistently outperform large activations when retention is the goal.

Repetition reinforces emotional connection, safety, and belonging.



Substance Matters

Depth, intellectual seriousness and clear values increase retention. Participants are seeking meaning-making, not only social connection.

Clarity on goals, values and boundaries inspire trust in the organization.



Early Engagement Must Feel Non- Transactional

Several models intentionally decouple engagement from immediate fundraising.

In a post–October 7 environment marked by heightened scrutiny and distrust, authenticity is a retention driver. Organizations that prioritize building trust and authentic relationships have seen an increase in their fundraising success.



Reflection

How do these learnings reflect what you are seeing in your community context?

Which learning feels most relevant for your Federation to explore more deeply?

What roadblocks exist for implementing these strategies locally?

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Some suggested next steps

JFNA / Impact & Growth can assist you in the following:

- Engage in a local **Community Listening Tour** to gather data
- Create a **Surge Task Force** to identify the highest priority opportunities
- Participate in a **Design Jam** to explore the “what is” and “what might be”