

The National Affinity Group on Jewish Poverty presents

COVID-19 Funder Briefs (3 of 6) Jobs

Many community members have faced job loss, underemployment, and growing financial hardship in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. As a result, many are facing food and housing insecurity and acute economic challenges for the very first time.

Social services agencies have ramped up and pivoted to address these urgent and emerging needs even while facing their own pandemic related challenges and significant revenue loss.

In this time of crisis, the National Affinity Group on Jewish Poverty seeks to bring these issues to the forefront and highlight community need, agency response, and concrete opportunities to partner and invest in this work.

Needs

There has been an enormous number of layoffs in the Jewish community.

They are occurring across sectors and at all levels of professional tiers. Job loss among Jewish agency professionals is just one example, with an estimate that of approximately 100,000 employees in the Jewish communal sector about 20,000 have been furloughed or laid off. This includes layoffs in JCC's, synagogues, Federations, and summer camps.

The trend of job loss and underemployment is expected to continue for some time to come. The big wave of individuals seeking employment is expected to still be ahead as extended and expanded unemployment benefits and the impact of PPP loans run out.

Job loss and underemployment have led to a dramatic increase in urgent needs for cash, food, housing, childcare, and other essentials, as well as greater uncertainty around health insurance coverage and critical benefits. Those unemployed and underemployed need immediate financial help and adjustment assistance. Many who now face sudden poverty are reluctant to seek help due to a sense of shame. Others may not know where to turn.

Many job seekers need retraining in order to shift to work on virtual platforms or prepare for career transitions as job needs continue to change in the face of the crisis. They need help navigating services such as career counseling services, vocational support, and job search assistance. Financial workshops are needed to help maximize limited resources, and wraparound services are needed to address growing need across multiple sectors, including mental health, housing, food insecurity, child care, and a range of social services. Participants will also require stipends, case management, and other assistance to sustain them throughout the employment programs.

*JVS Boston shares:
"Workforce development providers have had to move to remote mode and provide immediate economic assistance and help with reemployment. We have moved very quickly to implement technology solutions which are allowing us to provide remote services to our clients and will set us up for the future. This includes remote learning, remote coaching, and remote reemployment services through an online talent portal."*

Investment Opportunities: First Response

Agencies need to **expand counseling and career services staff** to support those who are out of work and seeking reemployment. Staff need training and support as they pivot to address new challenges faced by the community as a result of the crisis.

As services transition to digital platforms it will become critical to **invest in, refine, and expand** technological capacity and online service delivery models initiated during the pandemic. This includes virtual seminars, job clubs, classes, and coaching, as well as the support of remote work and program delivery.

Community members need **support with technology tools and Wi-Fi** to access online resources and participation in virtual programming.

Investment Opportunities: Organizational Resilience and Sustainability

Agencies have a significant and ongoing need for **operating funds to enable flexibility and sustainability** as they face declining revenues.

Agencies need funds for critical pivots to prepare job seekers for a changing employment landscape and offer **job training for new career opportunities and updated workplace realities**.

Agencies need funding for **assessment and evaluation of programming** and pandemic-related pivots to allow for thoughtful program development, effective outreach, and long-term planning for sustainability and community impact.

Agencies need to gather **industry and employment data and analysis** to understand what recovery looks like in their regions so they can best direct job seekers.

Organizations need support to invest in growing opportunities to **aggregate and coordinate delivery of virtual services** to anyone across the country.

As direct service organizations have dipped into their reserves deeply in order to serve critical client needs, **restoration funds are needed to restore their stability and viability** or some may go under, potentially leaving clients underserved or with nowhere to turn.

Emergency funds continue to be critical to address unexpected and rapidly growing client needs.

Jewish Community Services Baltimore shares: "Our career services staff are adept at working remotely, and we have seen an increase in the number of individuals reaching out to us across the country. As a result of COVID-19, there are new job opportunities for our clients. In the first few weeks of working remotely, we were able to place 12 individuals in these unique job opportunities. In the first seven weeks of working remotely, we have had 792 contacts and an additional 70 virtual programming participants with job seekers."

UJA Federation of New York shares: "While we are focused on immediate need right now, we are talking about longer term and know this stage will need coordinated, collocated social services with employment and mental health at the core. We will want to integrate mental health with employment services as circumstances have greatly heightened mental health challenges, which serve as a major barrier to reemployment."

Philanthropic Response

Foundations and donors are invited to reach out and join in this work within the framework of the National Affinity Group on Jewish Poverty.

Please contact **Deena Fuchs, Executive Vice President of Jewish Funders Network**, at Deena@jfunders.org to learn more.

Data, quotes, and other insights included in this brief are sourced from convenings, webinars, and work-group meetings hosted by the National Affinity Group on Jewish Poverty; JFN COVID-19 response surveys; and organizational websites.

