

MEMORANDUM

To: Ilan Wagner, Director, Onward Israel

From: The Rosov Consulting Team

Re: Onward Israel Cohort III 10-Month Findings

Date: February 17, 2016

Overview

Onward Israel is an innovative partnership between private philanthropists, the Jewish Agency for Israel, and local Jewish organizations and communities. The program is designed as a “next level” experience in Israel for young adults between the ages of 19–27, primarily university undergraduate students. The goal of Onward Israel is to provide its participants with immersive six to ten week-long resume-building experiences in Israel, including internships, fellowships, academic coursework, and service learning.

In order to assess the impact of the program and its meaningfulness to participants, Onward Israel has engaged Rosov Consulting to explore participants’ knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to Israel, Judaism, and personal/professional development, prior to and following their summer experience. This memo showcases findings from the North American contingent of Cohort III (summer of 2014), based on data gathered from participants at three moments in time: two weeks prior to the program, two weeks following the conclusion of the program, and ten months after the program’s end.

As described in previous reports, the Onward Israel experience strongly contributes to growth in participants’ knowledge and attitudes related to Israel, Jewish identity, and Jewish peoplehood, particularly when participants are assessed shortly following the program. This memo probes the longer-term effects of the experience, exploring areas of stability and change by comparing immediate post-program outcomes to outcomes measured nearly one year later.

Response Rates

The target population for this study consisted of 642 North Americans who participated in an Onward Israel program in the summer of 2014. Most of the participants completed the pre-program survey (92% response rate), a little over half completed the two-week post-program survey (65%), and a little less than half of the participants completed the ten-month post-program survey (40%, n=258).

Areas of Stability: Ten Months Later

Since the surveys included a great many individual question-items, the statistical technique of Factor Analysis¹ was used to condense the list of items into several over-arching concepts, or “factors,” as they are referred to statistically. Based on this analysis, six factors (or major themes) emerged – three attitudinal and three knowledge-based:

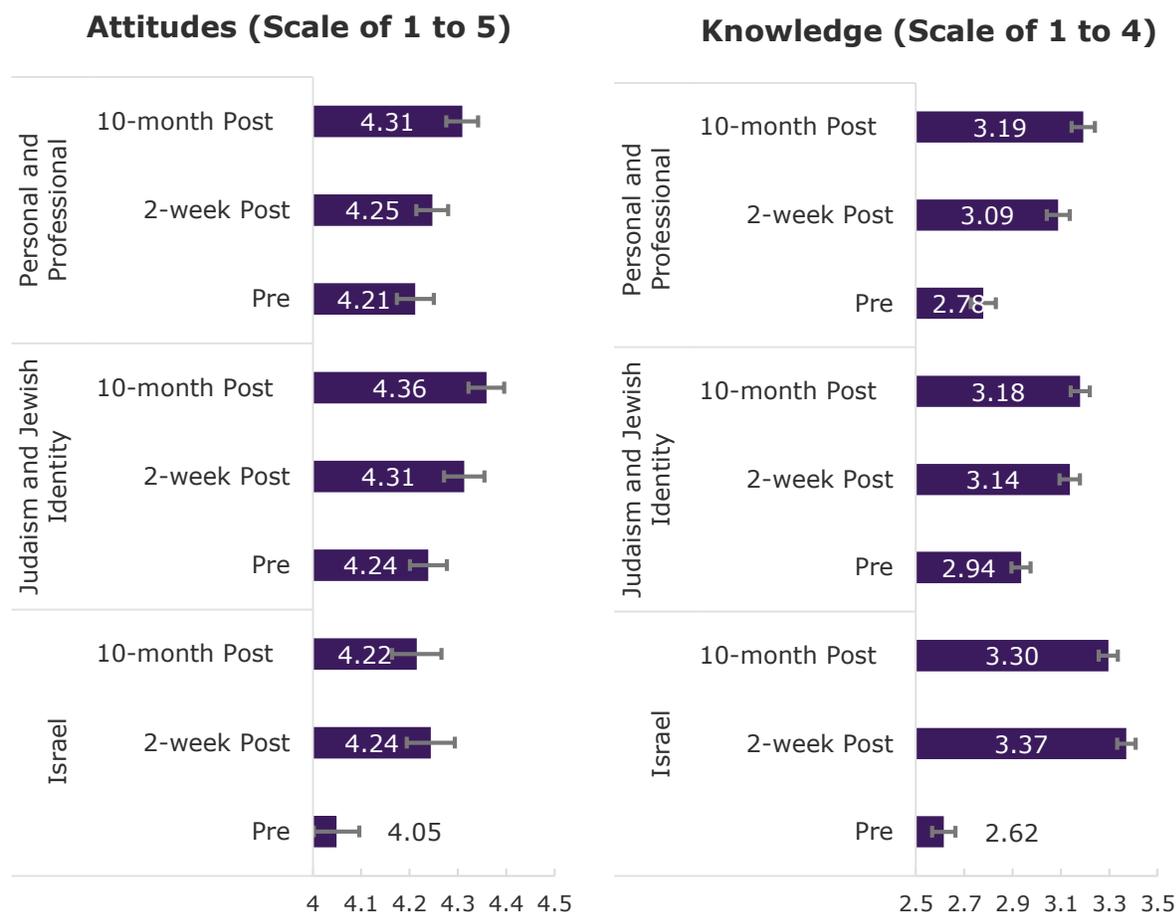
- **Attitudes related to Israel:** Connection to Israel and Israelis; sense of pride and familiarity
- **Attitudes related to Judaism and Jewish identity:** Sense of belonging to the Jewish people and connection to other Jews; interest in learning more of Jewish heritage, connection to other Jews
- **Attitudes related to personal and professional development:** Interest in academic/professional success and contributing positively to society
- **Knowledge related to Israel:** Knowledge about day-to-day life and diversity in Israel
- **Knowledge related to Judaism and Jewish identity:** Knowledge about Judaism, Jewish heritage, and Jewish communities around the world
- **Knowledge related to personal and professional development:** Knowledge about professional field of interest and relevant indicators of success

Exhibit 1 shows a comparison of these factors at the pre-program stage, the two-week post-program stage, and the 10-month post-program stage².

¹ Factor Analysis is a tool that enables researchers to see the patterns underlying interacting responses to individual survey items. It allows researchers to investigate concepts that are not easily measured directly, by collapsing a large number of question-items into a few main themes (factors).

² This time-interval comparison was conducted using a Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance. Error bars signify 95% confidence intervals; if the mean of a particular time interval is included within the error bars of another time interval, the change in means between the two time intervals is not statistically significant. No overlap implies statistically significant change.

Exhibit 1: Comparing Outcomes over Three Time Intervals



This analysis demonstrated the following findings:

- Short-term program effects:** Onward Israel significantly contributed to participants' growth in the majority of these areas. Specifically, when comparing participants' reported levels of knowledge and attitudes in the pre-program survey to the two-week post-program survey, we see statistically significant growth, consistent with findings from previous Onward Israel cohorts.
- Long-term program effects:** When comparing these same factors at the two-week post-program stage and the ten-month post-program stage, we see no statistically significant change – up or down – between the two time intervals. The levels of participants' knowledge and attitudes related to Israel and Judaism showed great stability over the ten months since the end of the program. (The level of knowledge and attitudes related to personal and professional development in fact increased over time, which is further discussed below.)

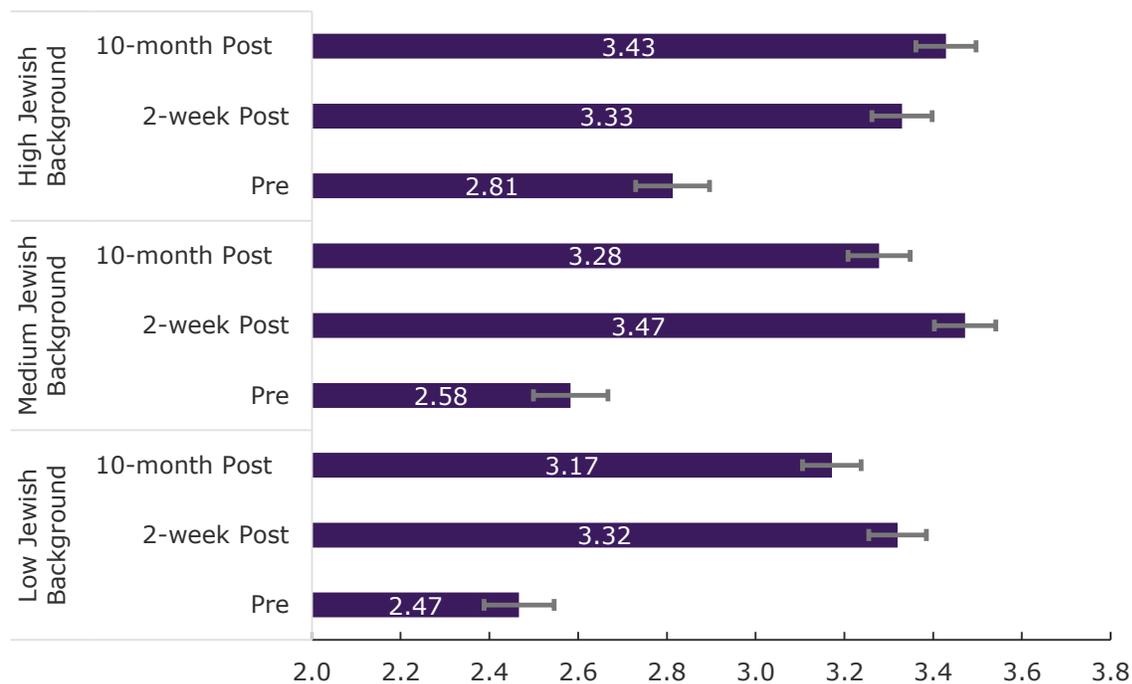
Outcomes and Prior Jewish Educational Experiences

The pre-program survey instrument included several questions that asked participants about the frequency with which they attended Jewish summer camps, day schools, supplementary schools, and youth groups.

Using the statistical method of Cluster Analysis³, participants were classified as having low, medium, or high level of engagement in prior Jewish educational experiences. As part of the ten-month analysis, we explored whether the stability of particular outcomes over time varied based on the level of participants’ Jewish background and prior Jewish engagement.

While, overall, participants’ knowledge about Israel remained stable ten months following the program, lesser-engaged participants—those of low or medium Jewish background— demonstrated a statistically significant decrease in knowledge about Israel over the course of the ten months after the end of the program (as seen in Exhibit 2). Those of high Jewish background maintained the level of knowledge that they had amassed immediately following the program. (Any increase was not statistically significant.)

Exhibit 2: Knowledge about Israel and Prior Jewish Engagement (Scale of 1 to 4)



The decrease among the lesser-engaged participants likely results from the composition of the “knowledge about Israel” factor. This factor was comprised of two items: “how much do you know about day-to-day life in Israel,” and “how much do you know about diversity in Israel.” Scoring highly on these items requires a familiarity with “real life” in Israel, which is produced during, and by, the actual program. It may fade over time due to being further away from the experience and from the country itself. Among those who are less-engaged, the distance might result in a decrease in level of knowledge. One could hypothesize that those who are highly-engaged may be involved in post-program experiences that minimize that distance.

³ Cluster Analysis is a technique that reveals structures in large sets of data and allows for dividing respondents into meaningful groups based on similarity in the respondents’ answers to key survey questions. Those individuals who end up in the same cluster have essentially provided similar responses to the questions that are the basis of the analysis. Individuals who end up in separate clusters are significantly different from one another on these key characteristics. The advantage of Cluster Analysis is the formation of groups based on how data are organized objectively, using a mathematical model, rather than a subjective scoring rubric.

Outcomes and Participation in Post-Trip Programming Organized by Onward Israel

The ten-month post-program survey instrument asked participants whether they attended events organized directly by Onward Israel or by program partners during the year following the program. These events included Shabbat dinners, reunions, alumni board events, and homecoming events. Only 35% of respondents indicated that they were aware of such events taking place. In order to assess whether participation in this type of programming was related to long-term program outcomes, we compared the six factor-based outcomes between two groups of alumni: those who were aware of post-programming organized by Onward Israel but *did not attend* and those who were aware of post-programming and *did attend*. Across all six factors, there were no statistical differences in the outcomes based on whether alumni attended post-programming.

It is possible that this finding may result from the comparison groups being too small, considering the limited number of respondents who were aware of post-programming to begin with. This by itself bares important implications. If Onward Israel wishes to emphasize alumni outreach and post-trip programming as part of its organizational goals, then it must consider more effective ways of engaging alumni and creating more-targeted events. At the same time, these findings pertaining to the relationship between long-term outcomes and participation in post-trip programming may also be interpreted in a way that implies that post-trip programming is not particularly impactful, and that the summer experience is impactful enough by itself. Onward Israel must decide how it chooses to proceed based on its own reflection on these findings.

Areas of Change: Ten Months Later

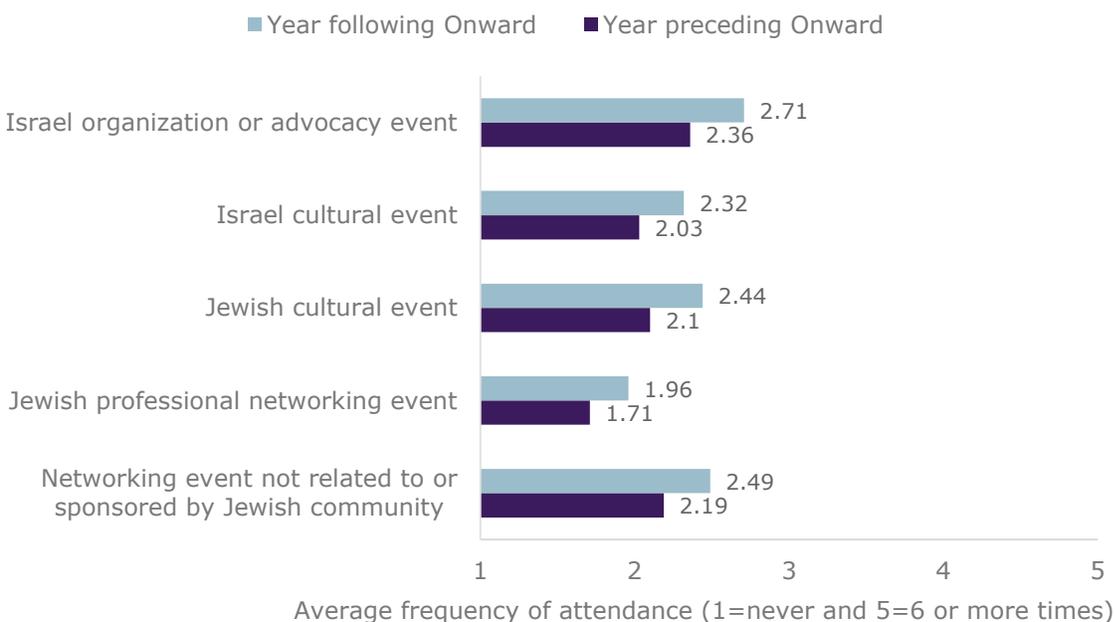
Personal and Professional Growth

As previously mentioned, two of the six factors that emerged from the Factor Analysis were attitudes and knowledge related to personal and professional development. As seen previously in Exhibit 1, when comparing participants' attitudes pertaining to personal and professional development prior to Onward Israel to immediately following the program, there was no significant change. However, when comparing participants' personal and professional knowledge and attitudes ten months later to when the program ended, we see a statistically significant increase in both of these domains. This finding differs from the stability observed in knowledge and attitudes related to Israel and Judaism, but is not particularly surprising considering that these ten months were spent in a university setting, focused on academic studies and additional resume-building activities, and where there is a strong emphasis on personal and professional growth. Therefore, the increase in participants' level of personal and professional knowledge and attitudes may occur irrespective of their experience with Onward Israel.

Increased Involvement in Activities and Events

The pre-program survey instrument asked participants how frequently they attended certain types of events in the year preceding Onward Israel. The ten-month post-program survey instrument asked participants about their attendance in the year following Onward Israel. As seen in Exhibit 3, there were five types of events that participants attended more frequently following their participation in Onward Israel: Israel advocacy events, Jewish professional networking events, networking events unrelated to the Jewish community, Jewish cultural events, and Israel cultural events. Activities that did not see more involvement included Jewish social events, Jewish religious activities, Jewish learning events, and social justice events.

Exhibit 3: Increased Involvement in Activities and Events



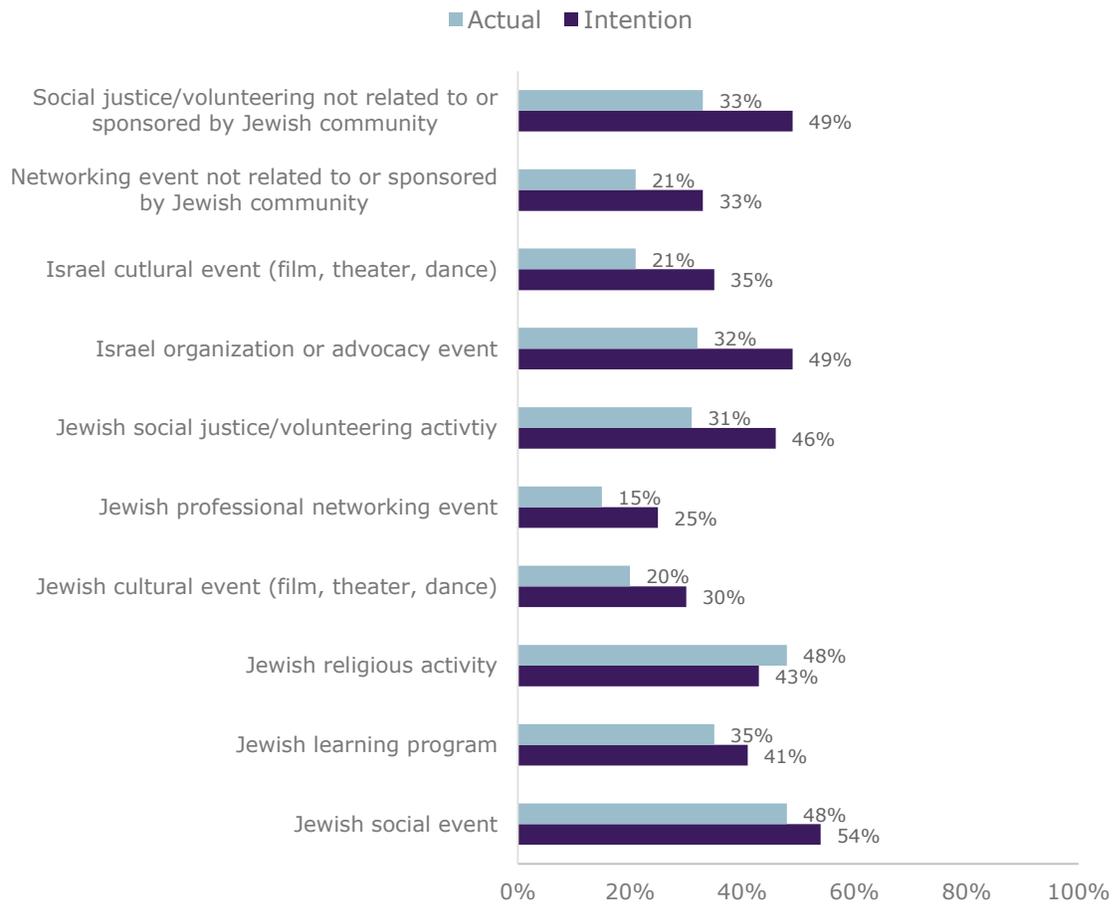
Slippage Between Intention and Actuality

The two-week post-program survey instrument included several questions inquiring whether participants’ intended in the upcoming year to organize events, take certain courses, visit Israel again, etc. The ten-month post-program survey instrument then followed-up by asking participants whether they actually fulfilled their intentions. Participants demonstrated slippage in a few areas, as is somewhat expected given academic demands and different types of engagements taking precedence. The observed gap between expressed intentions and actual behaviors is prevalent within social psychology’s understanding of behavior change, coined as the “intention-behavior gap⁴.” The following are examples of the “intention-behavior gap” among Onward Israel participants, based on responses of those who completed both the two-week and ten-month post-program surveys (n=196).

- **Initiating, Organizing, or Leading Events:** As seen in Exhibit 4, approximately half (or in some cases, less than half) of participants indicated that they planned to initiate, organize, or lead Jewishly-related, Israel-related, or professionally-related events in the year following Onward Israel. For each of these types of events, a smaller percentage of participants actually did so. Interestingly, a greater percentage of alumni initiated, organized, or led a Jewish religious service than those who originally intended to.

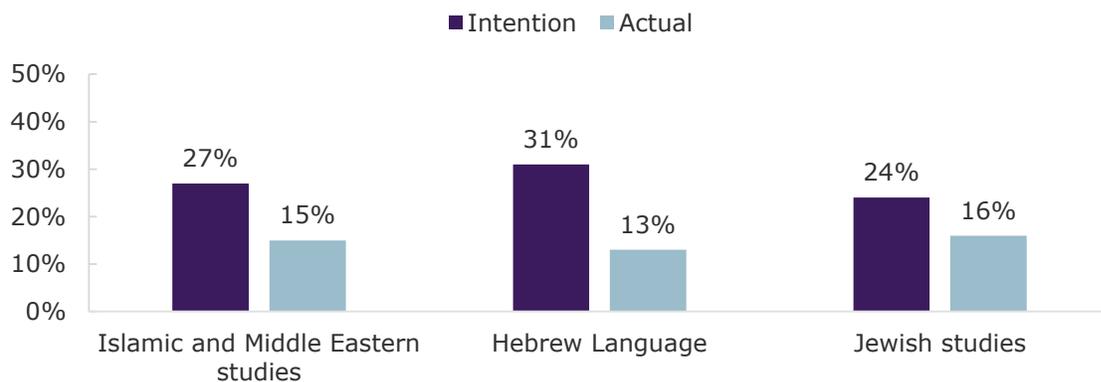
⁴ The “intention-behavior gap” has been extensively researched within the domain of health behavior, conceptualizing why individuals wish to eat healthier, exercise more, quit smoking, drive safer, etc., but do not act accordingly. A similar concept is common within the realm of environmentalism, referred to as the “value-action gap.” See: Sniehotta F. F., Scholz U., & Schwarzer R. (2005). Bridging the intention-behavior gap: Planning, self-efficacy, and action control in the adoption and maintenance of physical exercise. *Psychology and Health*, 20(2), 143-160; [Godin G., Conner M., & Sheeran P. (2005). Bridging the intention-behavior gap: the role of moral norm. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 44(4), 497-512; [Barr S. (2006). Environmental action in the home: Investigating the value-action gap. *Geography*, 91(1), 43-54.

Exhibit 4: Initiating, Organizing, or Leading Events: Intention vs. Actual



- Taking Courses:** As seen in Exhibit 5, approximately one quarter of participants indicated that they planned to take courses in Islamic and Middle Eastern studies, Hebrew language studies, and Jewish studies in the year following Onward Israel; the ten-month post-program survey illustrated that far fewer did so.

Exhibit 5: Taking Courses: Intention vs. Actual



- **Visiting Israel Again:** Of those who completed both the two-week and 10-month post-program surveys, 37% of respondents (n=72) indicated that they planned to visit Israel within the year following their participation in Onward Israel. In actuality, 19% of respondents (n=37) indeed visited Israel that year. In other words, approximately half of those who intended to return to Israel within the next year did so.

Summary and Recommendations for the Future

As previous reports have described, one of Onward Israel's strength lies in significantly strengthening participants' knowledge and attitudes related to Israel, Jewish identity, and Jewish peoplehood. This memo demonstrates that these impacts are sustained over the course of time, over ten months after the conclusion of the program. In future years, we plan to explore whether these outcomes remain stable over even longer periods of time after the end of the program.

In terms of participants' plans following Onward Israel – regarding initiating events on campus, taking courses, and visiting Israel again – there is some observed slippage between intentions expressed immediately after coming back from Israel and actual follow-through. Additionally, there is room for growth in terms of alumni outreach and post-trip programming organized by Onward Israel and its program partners; a minority of alumni seem to be aware of events, and even fewer actually attend. Depending on organizational goals and capacity, Onward Israel may wish to focus on this aspect of program design for future cohorts.