

January 1, 2019

To: Ilan Wagner, President and CEO, Onward Israel

From: The Rosov Consulting Team

Subject: Onward Israel Cohort VII — Exploring Program Impact and Participant Satisfaction

Overview

Since its inception in 2012, Onward Israel has partnered with our team at Rosov Consulting to learn about the program's impact on participants' relationships to Israel, Jewish identity, and Jewish peoplehood; professional aspirations; and personal growth. As part of this effort, each summer, we have surveyed participants two weeks prior to the start of their Onward program and two weeks after its conclusion to measure the immediate outcomes associated with spending time on Onward. Throughout the years, we have consistently observed Onward's significant impact on: participants' identity development; professional competency and confidence; knowledge about Israel and Jewish peoplehood; and emotional attachment to Israel and Israelis.

Our work with Cohort VII during summer 2018 provided an opportunity to embark on new, uncharted territory: exploring if and how participants' satisfaction with specific programmatic and logistical elements of their experience is related to the immediate impact produced by the program. Toward this end, we distributed a third survey — a modified online version of the “pen and paper” satisfaction survey that Onward has previously used — during the last week of the program. The satisfaction data served as an additional parameter along which we could assess Onward's impact and, in particular, investigate the extent to which there are differences in impact among those who are more or less satisfied with their experience on Onward.

This memo describes findings from our analysis of data gathered from Cohort VII participants, focusing on participants' satisfaction, the program's impact, and the relationship between the two. It intends to provide Onward's leadership team with a new vantage point on the workings of the program and its outcomes, as Onward's program design continues to evolve.

Survey Response Rates

Cohort VII consisted of 2,208 participants during summer 2018 — Onward's largest cohort yet. As in previous years, the pre-program survey garnered a very high response rate (82%), with 1,803 participants completing the survey. The response to the end-of-program satisfaction survey was also quite high, with 1,406 respondents (a 64% response rate). As often happens with series of multiple surveys, the next survey we distributed, the post-program survey, was completed by fewer respondents — 1,043 participants (a 47%

response rate). Overall, there were 771 individuals who completed all three surveys — slightly more than one third of the total Cohort VII participant pool. These individuals are the focus of this summer’s data analysis and the findings discussed below.¹

Participants’ Profiles

Exhibit 1 outlines various demographic characteristics of Cohort VII participants, as follows:

- The bulk of participants are mid-university (sophomores or juniors), ranging in age from 19 to 21.
- Nearly two-thirds of respondents identify as female.
- More than 90% of participants identify as Jewish, with most classifying themselves as Reform or Conservative Jews. Less than one-fifth of participants attended a Jewish high school for at least one year, while slightly more than one-third attended a Jewish day school. Approximately two-thirds of participants attended or worked at a Jewish supplementary school, overnight camp, or youth group.
- More than three-quarters of respondents participated in an Israel program prior to taking part in Onward. Of those who have been to Israel on an organized program, close to 60% are Birthright alumni.

In general, this mix of demographic characteristics is similar to what we’ve observed among previous cohorts.

¹ In order to ensure that this subset of 771 participants was representative of the fuller cohort, we compared the demographic composition of both groups, focusing on the variables included in Exhibit 1. The subset of 771 participants was found to be characteristically similar to the larger sample, with the exception of gender — female-identifying respondents are slightly over-represented in the analysis subset, compared to the overall cohort.

Exhibit 1: Participants' Demographic Characteristics

Age	18	3%
	19	21%
	20	38%
	21	21%
	22	9%
	23	8%
Class Year	Freshmen	20%
	Sophomores	44%
	Juniors	25%
	Seniors	11%
Gender	Females	61%
	Males	39%
Identifying as Jewish	Yes	92%
	No	8%
Jewish Denomination	Reform	32%
	Conservative	28%
	Just Jewish	20%
	Orthodox or Modern Orthodox	15%
	Other (including Reconstructionist, Renewal, and non-denominational)	5%
Prior Jewish Educational Experiences (attendance for at least one year/season)	Jewish day school — elementary/middle school	37%
	Jewish high school	19%
	Jewish supplementary school	67%
	Jewish overnight camp	60%
	Jewish youth group	61%
Prior Participation in an Israel Program	Yes	79%
	No	21%

Measuring Satisfaction

The satisfaction survey inquires about four main program elements:

The Internship Experience	The extent to which participants felt the internship was a good fit and whether it will help build participants' resumés.
The Program's Educational Components	Participants' satisfaction with the Israel Seminar, Weekender activity, and Breakout Seminar; whether the educational methods were interactive and inspired participants to think about Israel in a nuanced way.
Logistics	Including housing and the extent to which the program's design was balanced and organized.
Staff	The extent to which participants were satisfied with their group counselors and internship coordinator.

The specific survey items that comprise each of these categories are listed in Appendix A.

As Onward's leadership team has done with previous satisfaction surveys, an average score was calculated for each of these four elements, and a "composite score" was calculated from these four individual scores. Based on their composite scores, participants were classified for data-analysis purposes into two groups: less satisfied (44%; n=338) and more satisfied (56%; n=433).²

Program Impact and its Relationship to Satisfaction

In the post-program survey, participants were asked to reflect on what they were able to accomplish as part of their experience on Onward. Exhibit 2 depicts Onward's powerful contribution to participants' identity development and skill-building, and it indicates how the program's contribution differs according to the degree of participants' satisfaction with their experience.

As we've observed with previous cohorts, the vast majority of participants (at least 80%) felt that they were able to learn more about themselves, learn more about Israel, and build meaningful relationships with others during their time on Onward. **Across all of the dimensions listed in the table below, Onward's impact is significantly greater among those who were more satisfied with their experience compared to those who were less satisfied, demonstrating a strong relationship between impact and satisfaction.**

² Participants' composite scores ranged from 1 to 7. Scores between 1 to 5 were classified as relatively "less satisfied," and scores above 5 (i.e., between 5.01 and 7) were classified as relatively "more satisfied."

Exhibit 2: Take-Aways from the Onward Experience

“To what extent were you able to do the following during your time on Onward Israel?”
Percentage of participants who selected “a lot” or “very much” (top two scale points)

	Overall (n=771)	More Satisfied (n=433)	Less Satisfied (n=338)
Learn more about yourself	82%	91%	71%
Learn more about Israel	80%	88%	70%
Build meaningful relationships with others	80%	89%	70%
Think about Israel differently than you had before	74%	81%	66%
Gain valuable work experience	73%	84%	59%
Gain professional skills	70%	82%	55%
Explore your Jewish identity	65%	76%	51%
Contribute to Israeli society	60%	71%	47%
Gain leadership skills	59%	71%	45%
Do something good for others	59%	66%	50%

In order to further understand which specific components of the Onward experience are particularly impactful, participants who selected “a lot” or “very much” for the items above were asked to indicate which aspects of the program greatly contributed to their growth. Participants could choose from the following list: the internship, communal living, staff members (i.e., madrichim, internship coordinator), educational activities with their group (i.e., Israel Seminar), social activities with their group (i.e., evening activities), their Onward Israel peers, and day-to-day living in Israel. This is the first time we were able to quantitatively probe the perceived impact of different program features on the outcomes produced by the program. Exhibit 3 displays the top three features that most enriched participants’ experience, and the percentage of participants who selected each option.

Exhibit 3: Top Three Impactful Aspects of the Onward Experience

	1	2	3
Learn more about yourself (n=607)	Day-to-day living in Israel (87%)	Internship (77%)	Communal living (72%)
Learn more about Israel (n=606)	Day-to-day living in Israel (88%)	Educational activities with your group (73%)	Internship (70%)
Build meaningful relationships with others (n=603)	Communal living (79%)	Your Onward Israel peers (69%)	Social activities with your group (62%)
Think about Israel differently than you had before (n=549)	Day-to-day living in Israel (79%)	Educational activities with your group (67%)	Internship (64%)
Gain valuable work experience (n=540)	Internship (89%)	Day-to-day living in Israel (28%)	Staff members (17%)
Gain professional skills (n=523)	Internship (88%)	Day-to-day living in Israel (28%)	Educational activities with your group (19%)
Explore your Jewish identity (n=433)	Day-to-day living in Israel (76%)	Educational activities with your group (66%)	Social activities with your group (56%)
Contribute to Israeli society (n=442)	Internship (71%)	Day-to-day living in Israel (69%)	Educational activities with your group (32%)
Gain leadership skills (n=437)	Internship (76%)	Communal living (41%)	Day-to-day living in Israel (35%)
Do something good for others (n=431)	Day-to-day living in Israel (60%)	Internship (50%)	Communal living (50%)

The survey responses demonstrate that the program features that participants perceive as most impactful are day-to-day living in Israel, their internship, the program’s educational components, and communal living.

While participants’ retrospective reflections are helpful in understanding Onward’s impact, a more comprehensive, rigorous approach — a “gold standard” in quantitative research methodology — is to compare participants’ post-program survey responses to their pre-program responses. Based on a factor analysis³ of several of the items included in the pre-program and post-program survey instruments, we can assess Onward’s impact across six main dimensions (“factors”): (i) connection to Israel and Israelis;

³ Factor analysis is a statistical technique that reduces a large number of variables into a smaller set of variables (“factors”), making the data more manageable and easier to understand. Each factor is composed of variables exhibiting similar response patterns.

(ii) knowledge about Israel; (iii) connection to Jewish peoplehood; (iv) knowledge related to Jewish peoplehood; (v) professional confidence and competency; and (vi) professional direction. A list of these factors and the items they are comprised of is included in Appendix B.

As shown in Exhibit 4, participants exhibited statistically significant growth in all of these areas, aside from their “connection to Jewish peoplehood.” In the case of this outcome, participants had reported such high scores at the onset of their program that there wasn’t much room for (numerical) growth by the end — what is known as a ceiling effect.

This positive change in these outcomes is similar to what we’ve observed with previous cohorts, demonstrating that Onward’s impact continues to be sustained, despite its rapid growth in size.

While it’s fairly common for the quality of an experience to be jeopardized when the quantity of participants greatly expands, this has not been the case for Onward. The findings from Cohort VII underline that as Onward has evolved, it has continued to provide participants with a meaningful experience.

Exhibit 4: Pre-Program and Post-Program Factor Scores (Scale of 1 to 7)

	Pre-Program Mean	Post-Program Mean	p-value
Connection to Israel and Israelis	5.71	5.82	<0.001
Knowledge about Israel	4.28	4.94	<0.001
Connection to Jewish peoplehood	6.09	6.05	NS
Knowledge related to Jewish peoplehood	5.12	5.38	<0.001
Professional competency and confidence	5.84	5.94	<0.001
Professional direction	5.36	5.57	<0.001

Note: NS = not statistically significant

When comparing the responses of participants who were more satisfied with their time on Onward to those who were less satisfied, it becomes clear that for four of the five outcomes where there was significant growth, this growth was only significant among participants who were more satisfied with their experience.⁴ This finding again emphasizes a clear relationship between the program’s impact and participants’ satisfaction with their experience. Exhibit 5 displays the pre-post mean difference for both groups, showing that in most cases the change for those who were less satisfied is relatively negligible. The exception is “knowledge about Israel,” an area in which Onward seems to make a deep impact, regardless of participants’ degree of satisfaction.

⁴ As one of the first steps in this analysis, in order to first see whether there was a relationship between satisfaction and impact, we ran partial correlations between each of these factors (using the “post” measure and controlling for the “pre” measure) and each of the four individual satisfaction scores and the composite satisfaction score. We found that these correlations were significant (although weak), which allowed us to proceed with the next step of categorizing participants’ composite satisfaction scores.

Exhibit 5: Factor Pre-Post Mean Differences, Segmented by Degree of Satisfaction

	More Satisfied	Less Satisfied
Connection to Israel and Israelis	0.19	0
Knowledge about Israel	0.73	0.58
Knowledge related to Jewish peoplehood	0.35	0.15
Professional competency and confidence	0.15	0.02
Professional direction	0.30	0.09

Engaging with Israel and Jewish Life

In addition to exhibiting a stronger connection to and/or knowledge about Israel and Jewish peoplehood, participants report an increased desire to be involved with Israel and Jewish life following their time on Onward. This finding is consistent with what we've observed among previous cohorts.

Exhibit 6 compares how frequently respondents participated in various Jewish and Israel-related activities in the year leading up to their Onward experiences, and how frequently they intend to participate in such activities following Onward. Across the board, participants report a significantly higher likelihood of engaging in such activities after Onward. **Their experience on the program seems to have influenced them to want to be more involved with Jewish life and Israel.**

Exhibit 6: Behavioral Intentions

"Thinking back to the last 12 months, how often did you..." /
 "Thinking about the coming year, how often do you anticipate you will..."
 Scale of 1 to 7 where 1="Not at all" and 7="Very often"

	Pre-Program Mean	Post-Program Mean	p-value
Participating in conversations about Israel	4.98	5.25	<0.001
Following news about Israel	5.03	5.39	<0.001
Participating in conversations about Judaism	5.17	5.31	<0.05
Following news about Jews and Jewish communities around the world	4.43	4.88	<0.001
Celebrating Shabbat with families or friends	5.01	5.42	<0.001
Studying traditional Jewish texts	3.18	3.61	<0.001
Participating in Jewish life in your community	5.30	5.55	<0.001
Taking a leadership role in Jewish life in your community	4.47	4.84	<0.001

In general, participants report an increased intention to be involved, irrespective of their degree of satisfaction with their time on Onward. There were, however, a few exceptions to this pattern: in terms of intending to participate in Jewish life in their community, participating in conversations about Judaism, and following news about Jews and Jewish communities around the world, only those participants who were

more satisfied with their experience displayed an increased desire to be involved. There was no change for those who were less satisfied with their experience.

The pre-program and post-program surveys also probe participants’ willingness and ability to educate others about Israel, give others a flavor of what Israel is like, and engage in pro-Israel advocacy. As shown in Exhibit 7, participants’ ability to educate others about Israel and give others a flavor of what Israel is like is significantly stronger after spending time on Onward. Interestingly, participants begin Onward feeling more willing than able to engage with Israel in these ways, and following their experience on their program, their ability to serve as “Israel educators” begins to catch up to their willingness to do so. It is important to note that, unlike the outcomes discussed above, here there is no relationship between the degree of participants’ satisfaction and changes in participants’ willingness or ability to engage with Israel in these ways.

Importantly, while participants do not report a significantly stronger ability to “advocate” for Israel, there is a slight trend of growth in this area — a striking finding considering that Onward’s educational curriculum seeks to provide participants with a nuanced, “rose and thorns” approach to understanding and experiencing Israel. This commonly leads individuals to feeling less interested and less equipped to advocate for Israel, but in the case of Onward, participants’ willingness and ability to do so are preserved.

Exhibit 7: Israel Engagement Outcomes

“To what extent are you willing/able to...”
 Scale of 1 to 7, where 1=“Not at all” and 7=“Very much”

	Pre-Program Mean	Post-Program Mean	p-value
Willingness to give others a flavor of what Israel is like	5.64	5.64	NS
Willingness to educate others about Israel	5.60	5.60	NS
Willingness to engage in pro-Israel advocacy	4.75	4.81	NS
Ability to give other others a flavor of what Israel is like	5.06	5.27	<0.001
Ability to educate others about Israel	5.09	5.23	<0.05
Ability to engage in pro-Israel advocacy	4.79	4.90	NS

As we’ve observed with previous cohorts, participants are quite keen to return to Israel following their time on Onward. Nearly all participants, irrespective of whether they were more or less satisfied with their time on Onward, report that they plan to visit Israel again — 41% within the year proceeding Onward, and 56% thereafter. Exhibit 8 displays an array of what participants plan on doing when they visit Israel again.⁵ Notably, more than a quarter plan to live in Israel for an extended period of time, more than a quarter wish to visit Israelis that they met during the time on Onward, and more than a tenth plan to work or volunteer either at the organization at which they interned as part of their Onward program, or a different Israeli organization. These

⁵ Respondents could choose multiple options.

findings emphasize that participants' experience on Onward creates a desire to maintain and build upon their connection with Israel and Israelis — it inspires participants to want to do more in Israel.

Exhibit 8: Participants' Plans for Visiting Israel Again (n=735)

Take a vacation	67%
Visit family and/or friends	52%
Visit Israelis you met during your Onward summer	27%
Live in Israel for an extended period of time	27%
Go on an organized travel/touring program	24%
Volunteer or intern with a different organization than the one you interned with on Onward	18%
Work for pay for an organization other than the one you interned with on Onward	16%
Study at an Israeli university	15%
Volunteer or intern with the organization you interned with on Onward	12%
Work for pay at the organization you interned with on Onward	11%
Serve in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF)	8%
Attend a yeshiva, seminary, or religious study program	7%

Summary and Conclusions

The findings from Cohort VII illustrate that Onward continues to meaningfully contribute to participants' personal and professional growth, deepened knowledge about Israel and Jewish peoplehood, strengthened relationship to Israel and Israelis, and increased desire to maintain their connection with Israel. We have observed similar findings with previous cohorts, and the fact that they are once again evidenced point to the sustained quality of the Onward experience, despite the program's marked growth in size and the challenges that can accompany such growth.

For the first time, we have been able to quantitatively explore which elements of the program are perceived as most impactful. Participants credit day-to-day living in Israel, their internship experience, Onward's educational components, and communal living with having been particularly influential players in their personal and professional growth. In addition, and also for the first time, we have been able to probe the extent to which participants' satisfaction with their experience is related to the overall impact produced by the program. In this respect, we found a distinct relationship between the degree of participants' satisfaction and the magnitude of the program's impact: participants who were more satisfied with their experience exhibited greater growth compared to those who were less satisfied.

This finding can nuance how Onward leadership understands the concept of participant satisfaction. Until now, satisfaction has been associated with alumni recommending the program to others, recruiting future participants, and improving program logistics. We see now that satisfaction is also associated with the program's core concerns — its impact. Specifically, a higher degree of satisfaction is related to producing stronger, significantly greater program outcomes. As such, focusing on satisfaction — in relation to the internship experience, the program's educational components, its logistics, and staff — is of ever more importance, particularly as Onward continues to grow and evolve.

APPENDIX A: Satisfaction Survey – Categories and Items

Internship (6 items)	I was satisfied with my overall internship experience
	I was satisfied with the pre-program internship placement process
	I was satisfied with the level of support I received during the program from my internship coordinator
	The internship was a good fit for me
	The internship made valuable use of my time
	The internship will help me build my resume
Educational Components (11 items)	I was satisfied with the overall enrichment and educational components of the program
	I was satisfied with the program’s recreational and travel days (i.e., Israel Seminar)
	I was satisfied with Connections Evening
	I was satisfied with my Breakout Seminar
	I was satisfied with my Weekender activity
	I was satisfied with my peer-led Shabbat dinner
	The experience challenged me to think more deeply about Israel
	The educational method was interactive
	The experience exposed me to the diversity of Israeli society in a balanced and fair manner
	There was a reasonable level of choice built-in to the program
	The program staff enhanced my educational experience
Logistics (3 items)	I was satisfied with my housing
	The program was well-organized and executed
	The program struck the right balance between structure and freedom
Staff (2 items)	I was satisfied with my group counselors/coordinators (madrichim or madrichot)
	I was satisfied with my internship coordinator

APPENDIX B: Program Outcomes - Factors and Items

Connection to Israel and Israelis (Reliability = 0.89)	I feel a strong connection to Israel and Israelis
	I feel at home in Israel
	Caring about Israel is a very important part of my being a Jew
	I feel proud of Israel
	I can articulate to others what Israel means to me
	I feel a sense of responsibility to Israel and Israelis
Knowledge about Israel (Reliability = 0.90)	I know about Israeli politics
	I know about the Israeli economy
	I know about Israel's geopolitical situation
	I know about diversity within Israeli society
	I know about Israeli culture
Connection to Jewish Peoplehood (Reliability = 0.84)	I have a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people
	I feel connected to other Jews around the world
	I feel connected to other Jews at home or at school
	I am interested in learning more about Judaism and my Jewish heritage
Knowledge related to Jewish Peoplehood (Reliability = 0.82)	I feel connected to Judaism and my Jewish heritage
	I know about different ways of being Jewish
	I know about Judaism and my Jewish heritage
Professional Competency and Confidence (Reliability = 0.86)	I know about Jewish communities around the world
	I manage myself well in the workplace in terms of problem-solving, taking initiative, etc.
	I am confident in my ability to present myself to an employer
	I am confident in my resume
	I have the ability and knowhow to network in my professional field of interest
	I am comfortable in a cross-cultural working environment
	I feel confident in professional settings
	I feel confident in new and unfamiliar settings
I can work well with people from different cultural backgrounds	
Professional Direction (Reliability = 0.88)	I know what working my professional field entails
	I know where I am headed professionally, or what my options are
	I have a clear sense of my academic and/or career goals
	I know about what it takes to succeed in my area of professional interest
	I have skills relevant to my professional field of interest
	I know about the day-to-day activities related to my area of professional interest