

January 15, 2020

To: Ilan Wagner, President and CEO, Onward Israel

From: The Rosov Consulting Team

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

Overview

As part of our evaluation work with Onward Israel during Summer 2019 (Cohort VIII), we once again assessed participants' satisfaction with their experience, the program's immediate impact, and the relationship between the two. We had first embarked on exploring the relationship between impact and satisfaction in 2018 as part of work with Cohort VII. Our findings had shown that, indeed, participants who were more satisfied with their time on Onward Israel exhibited greater growth in their connection to Israel, knowledge about Jewish peoplehood, and professional skill development, compared to those who were less satisfied with their experience. Our evaluation work with Cohort VIII this past summer allowed us to test the validity of these findings and to explore whether the magnitude of impact and degree of satisfaction that we observed in the past were reproduced, even while Onward's participant numbers and program offerings have continued to grow.

Methodology

Cohort VIII was Onward's largest summer cohort to date, comprised of 2,335 participants. As part of our work, we surveyed participants at three intervals: two weeks prior to the start of their Onward program, during the last week of their Onward program (this survey focused on satisfaction), and two weeks after their program's conclusion. At the request of Onward's leadership team, we also distributed a survey two weeks after the program's start—a shortened version of the satisfaction survey distributed at the end of the program—in order for the staff to get an early sense of whether certain program elements required attention. The results of this shorter satisfaction survey were used by Onward internally and are not included in this analysis.

The survey response rates, shown in Exhibit 1, follow the same trend that we have observed in previous years: the pre-program survey received the greatest number of responses, with each subsequent survey attracting fewer respondents. Overall, there were 492 participants who completed all three surveys involved in this study—approximately one-fifth (21%) of the full cohort. These individuals are the focus of our data analysis and the findings discussed below.¹

¹ In order to ensure that this subset of 492 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 492 participants was found to be characteristically similar to the larger sample, with the exception of gender—female-identifying respondents are slightly overrepresented in the analysis subset, compared to the overall cohort.

Exhibit 1: Survey Response Rates

	Number of Responses	Response Rate
Pre-Program Survey	1,868	80%
Mid-Program Satisfaction Survey	1,209	52%
End-of-Program Satisfaction Survey	1,127	48%
Post-Program Survey	898	38%

Participants' Profiles

The demographic characteristics of Cohort VIII participants in this study are displayed in Exhibit 2 and can be described as follows:

- Approximately two-thirds of respondents are underclassmen (freshmen or sophomores), individuals who are early on in their college career.
- Two-thirds of respondents identify as female.
- Nearly all respondents (95%) identify as Jewish; most classify themselves as Reform or Conservative Jews. Slightly under half of respondents attended a Jewish day school, while approximately one-fifth attended a Jewish high school for at least one year. A little under two-thirds attended or worked at a Jewish supplementary school, overnight camp, or youth group.
- More than 80% of respondents have visited Israel prior to participating in Onward. Of these, nearly two-thirds are Birthright alumni, and slightly over a third had attended a teen program in Israel that was shorter than three months.

On the whole, the demographic composition of Cohort VIII respondents is similar to what we have observed in previous years.

Exhibit 2: Participants' Demographic Characteristics

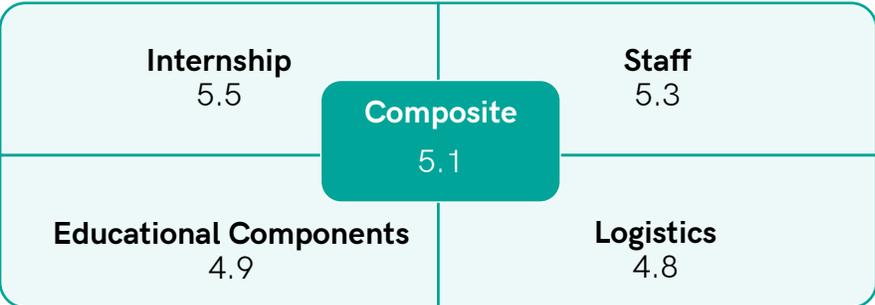
Class Year	Freshmen	25%
	Sophomores	44%
	Juniors	21%
	Seniors	10%
Gender	Female	67%
	Male	33%
Identifying as Jewish	Yes	95%
	No	5%
Jewish Denomination	Reform	34%
	Conservative	31%
	Just Jewish	20%
	Orthodox or Modern Orthodox	9%
	Other (including Reconstructionist, Renewal, and non-denominational)	6%
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	66%
	Jewish overnight camp	60%
	Jewish youth group	61%
Visited Israel before Onward	Yes	87%
	No	13%
Context of Prior Visit to Israel	Birthright	64%
	Family visit	53%
	Teen program shorter than three months	37%
	Post-high school program shorter than three months (other than Birthright)	6%
	Post-high school program longer than three months	4%
	Teen program longer than three months	3%
	Synagogue mission	2%

Measuring Satisfaction

Similar to our work last year, we classified the satisfaction survey items in relation to four categories: the internship experience, educational components of the program, logistics, and staff. The specific survey items that comprise each of these categories are listed in Appendix A.

We calculated the average score for each of these elements, along with a “composite score” based on the individual scores for the four categories. The average scores for the four categories and the composite are displayed in Exhibit 3. Participants were then classified for analysis purposes within two groups based on their composite scores: less satisfied (40%; n=197) and more satisfied (60%; n=295).²

Exhibit 3: Satisfaction Scores



Note: Scores are based on a 7-point scale where 1 = “Not at all satisfied” and 7 = “Very satisfied”.

Cohort VIII’s composite satisfaction score (5.1 out of 7) was the same as that of Cohort VII, despite Onward’s growth in size this past year and the quality-control challenges that can be associated with such growth. Cohort VIII’s internship satisfaction score had even improved since the previous summer, having increased from 5.1 to 5.5.

Measuring Impact and its Relationship to Satisfaction

As we have proposed over the years, Onward’s impact can be best understood across six key dimensions: (i) connection to Israel and Israelis; (ii) knowledge about Israel; (iii) connection to Jewish peoplehood; (iv) knowledge about Jewish life; (v) professional confidence and competency; and (vi) professional direction. These dimensions—or “factors”—emerge from a factor analysis of several of the items included in the pre-program and post-program surveys.³ 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 following their time on Onward, aside from their “connection to Jewish peoplehood.” In the case of this particular

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.”

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.

dimension of impact, 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.

The positive changes in these outcomes are similar to what we've observed with previous cohorts, demonstrating that Onward's impact continues to be sustained, despite its growth in size over time. 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. Once again, the findings from Cohort VIII underline that as Onward has evolved, it has continued to provide participants with a meaningful, growth-oriented experience across multiple dimensions.

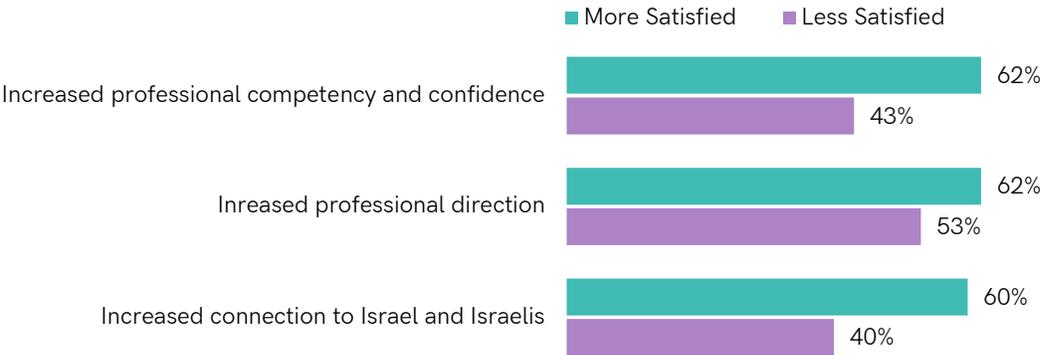
Exhibit 4: Pre-Program and Post-Program Factor Scores (Scale of 1 to 7)

	Pre-Program Mean	Post-Program Mean	p value
Connection to Israel and Israelis	5.71	5.75	<.05
Knowledge about Israel	4.06	4.68	<.001
Connection to Jewish Peoplehood	6.06	6.01	NS
Knowledge about Jewish Life	4.98	5.27	<.001
Professional Competency and Confidence	5.73	5.86	<.001
Professional Direction	5.19	5.42	<.001

Note: NS = Not statistically significant

When assessing the program's impact in relation to participants' satisfaction, we see that for three of the outcomes where there was significant growth following the program, this change was only significant among participants who were more satisfied with their time on Onward. Exhibit 5 displays the percentage of participants who grew in each of these areas, comparing those who were less satisfied and those who were more satisfied with their time on Onward. In each of these cases, a greater percentage of those who were more satisfied exhibited higher outcomes scores following the program compared to those who were less satisfied.

Exhibit 5: Participants with Stronger Outcomes Scores, Segmented by Degree of Satisfaction



For the two other outcomes where we observe significant growth in the overall sample—both knowledge-related—we see that Onward greatly impacts participants, irrespective of their degree of satisfaction. This finding supports what has been evidenced by previous cohorts: enhancing participants’ knowledge about Israel and Jewish life is one of Onward’s key achievements and selling points.

Engaging with Israel and Jewish Life

Beyond increasing participants’ connection to Israel and knowledge about Israel and Jewish life, the Onward experience instills in participants a desire to put their deepened knowledge and connection into practice. The pre-program survey asks participants to indicate how frequently they have engaged in specific Jewish and Israel-related activities in the year leading up to Onward; the post-program survey then asks how often participants intend to engage in the same activities in the coming year. Exhibit 6 shows that for nearly all of these activities—with the exception of participating in conversations about Israel or Judaism—participants are significantly more inclined to engage in these activities following their time on Onward. These findings are consistent with what we’ve observed among previous cohorts, suggesting that Onward continues to influence and inspire participants to want to be more involved in 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...”
 7-point scale where 1 = “Not at all” and 7 = “Very often”.

	Pre-Program Mean	Post-Program Mean	p value
Participating in Jewish life in my community	5.17	5.39	<.05
Celebrating Shabbat with family or friends	5.03	5.34	<.001
Following news about Israel	4.59	5.08	<.001
Participating in conversations about Israel	4.94	5.07	NS
Participating in conversations about Judaism	5.00	5.07	NS
Taking a leadership role in Jewish life in my community	4.38	4.80	<.001
Following news about Jews and Jewish communities around the world	4.25	4.60	<.001
Studying traditional Jewish texts	2.87	3.21	<.001

Note: NS = Not statistically significant

When we segment the data according to participants’ degree of satisfaction, we find that in actuality, only those who were more satisfied with their Onward experience are interested in becoming more involved in Jewish life and Israel. This is also the case with participating in conversations about Judaism and Israel, items where we did not observe any significant change in the overall sample. Once we compare those who were more satisfied with their time on the program to those who were less satisfied, we see that the more satisfied participants, indeed, wish to engage in such conversations more frequently following the program. Importantly, when we analyzed these data points for Cohort VII last summer, we had only observed this

direct correlation between participants’ satisfaction and intent to participate for a select number of activities. For Cohort VIII, though, this correlation exists across the gamut of the Jewish and Israel-related activities included in the survey. **These findings highlight the importance of bolstering participant satisfaction: the more satisfied the participants are, the greater the value they derive from their Onward experience, both during the program and thereafter, as well.**

Another way in which we’ve seen Onward participants express their heightened connection to Israel is through returning to Israel after the program’s conclusion. Post-program survey data show that participants are quite eager to return to Israel; nearly all participants, irrespective of their degree of satisfaction, indicate that they plan to visit Israel either in the coming year (40%) or thereafter (57%). Exhibit 7 shows that participants are interested in returning to Israel in a variety of frameworks. Approximately a quarter plan to live in Israel for an extended period of time, more than a quarter wish to visit Israelis they met during their time on Onward, and nearly a fifth plan to work or volunteer in Israel. These findings emphasize that participants’ experience on Onward creates a desire to maintain and strengthen their connection with Israel and Israelis—it inspires participants to want to more deeply experience the country.

Exhibit 7: Participants’ Plans for Visiting Israel Again (n=470)

Take a vacation	70%
Visit family and/or friends	53%
Visit Israelis you met during your Onward summer	26%
Go on an organized travel/touring program	25%
Live in Israel for an extended period of time	22%
Volunteer or intern with a different organization than the one you interned with on Onward	19%
Study at an Israeli university	14%
Work for pay for an organization other than the one you interned with on Onward	13%
Volunteer or intern with the organization you interned with on Onward	11%
Work for pay at the organization you interned with on Onward	7%
Attend a yeshiva, seminary, or religious study program	4%
Serve in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF)	3%

Impactful Aspects of the Onward Experience

In the post-program survey, participants were asked to indicate what they had been able to accomplish through their time on Onward. Exhibit 8 showcases Onward’s powerful contribution to participants’ identity development and skill building, outcomes which also differ based on the degree to which participants were satisfied with the program.

As we’ve observed with previous cohorts, approximately 80% of participants 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, once again demonstrating a strong, distinct relationship between impact and satisfaction.

Exhibit 8: 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=492)	More Satisfied (n=295)	Less Satisfied (n=197)
Build meaningful relationships with others	80%	88%	78%
Learn more about Israel	79%	89%	65%
Learn more myself	78%	85%	68%
Think about Israel differently than you had before	72%	80%	61%
Gain valuable work experience	72%	82%	57%
Gain professional skills	69%	78%	55%
Gain leadership skills	58%	68%	42%
Explore my Jewish identity	57%	70%	39%
Do something good for others	52%	60%	39%
Contribute to Israeli society	51%	69%	39%

As we had done with Cohort VII, we asked participants who selected “a lot” or “very much” for the items above to indicate which aspects of the program had most contributed to their growth. Participants could choose from the following list: the internship, communal living, staff members, educational activities with their group, social activities with their group, their Onward Israel peers, and day-to-day living in Israel. Exhibit 9 displays the top three features that most enriched participants’ experience and the percentage of participants who selected each option.

Consistent with our findings from Cohort VII, Cohort VIII participants found that day-to-day living in Israel and the internship itself were the most impactful elements of their time on Onward. This confirms what we’ve observed over time to be Onward’s “sweet spot”: utilizing Israel as a platform to provide a professionally rich experience that enables young adults to grow. In addition to day-to-day living and their internship, participants noted that the program’s educational components and communal living also meaningfully contributed to their experience, but to a relatively lesser extent.

Exhibit 9: Top Three Impactful Aspects of the Onward Experience

	1	2	3
Build meaningful relationships with others (n=388)	Communal living (82%)	Onward Israel peers (77%)	Day-to-day living in Israel (65%)
Learn more about Israel (n=386)	Day-to-day living in Israel (92%)	Educational activities with your group (73%)	Internship (67%)
Learn more about myself (n=380)	Day-to-day living in Israel (87%)	Internship (79%)	Communal living (75%)
Think about Israel differently than you had before (n=351)	Day-to-day living in Israel (85%)	Educational activities with your group (71%)	Internship (67%)
Gain valuable work experience (n=350)	Internship (95%)	Day-to-day living in Israel (34%)	Staff members (20%)
Gain professional skills (n=335)	Internship 94%)	Day-to-day living in Israel (24%)	Staff members (18%)
Gain leadership skills (n=279)	Internship (82%)	Day-to-day living in Israel (48%)	Communal living (37%)
Explore your Jewish identity (n=265)	Day-to-day living in Israel (81%)	Educational activities with your group (67%)	Social activities with your group (49%)
Do something good for others (n=251)	Internship (62%)	Communal living (52%)	Day-to-day living in Israel (51%)
Contribute to Israeli society (n=249)	Internship (78%)	Day-to-day living in Israel (76%)	Educational activities with your group (30%)

Summary and Recommendations

As we've observed in our analysis of data from previous cohorts, the findings from Cohort VIII demonstrate that Onward deepens participants' knowledge about Israel and Jewish life, strengthens their connection to Israel and desire to become more involved with Israel and Judaism, and catalyzes their professional growth. Throughout its evolution and expansion over the years, Onward has continued to provide participants with a high quality experience.

Our analysis also shows that participants who were more satisfied with their experience exhibited stronger outcomes, compared to those who were less satisfied. This finding validates what we had first learned in our work last year with Cohort VII—there is indeed a strong correlation between program impact and

participant satisfaction. In light of this finding, we recommended at that time that Onward should continue to pay attention to improving participant satisfaction, since it clearly plays a role in yielding strong outcomes. While distributing a short satisfaction survey early in the program to “monitor” satisfaction helps address this need to some extent, it would be valuable to analyze these data, see which programs and specific elements require improvement, and assess whether participants’ satisfaction increases over the course of the program.

Appendix A: Satisfaction Survey – Categories and Items

Internship (5 items)	I was satisfied with the pre-program internship placement process
	I was satisfied with my supervisor at work
	The internship was a good fit for me
	The internship gave me a sense of accomplishment
	The internship will help me build my resume
Educational Components (9 items)	I was satisfied with the program’s recreational and travel days (i.e., Israel Seminar)
	I was satisfied with the program’s evening activities
	I was satisfied with my Breakout Shabbaton
	I was satisfied with my Chug activity
	I was satisfied with my Shishi tour
	The peer-led Shabbat dinner added to my sense of participation in Jewish life during the program
	The experience challenged me to think more deeply about Israel
	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
Logistics (6 items)	I received sufficient information about the program before my arrival
	The program was well-organized and executed
	The program staff did a good job with communicating important information
	The program struck the right balance between structure and freedom
	I was satisfied with my housing
	I felt safe and secure this summer
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	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	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	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
	I feel connected to Judaism and my Jewish heritage
Knowledge about Jewish Life	I know about different ways of being Jewish
	I know about Judaism and my Jewish heritage
	I know about Jewish communities around the world
Professional Competency and Confidence	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 skills relevant to my professional field of interest
	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	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 know about the day-to-day activities related to my area of professional interest