**About the Mandel Excellence Program**

The **Mandel Excellence Program** is an initiative of the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI) and the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Foundation. The goal of the program is to enrich JAFI’s professional staff with vision-led young leaders who have the aspiration, commitment, and practical skills needed to cope with the future challenges that face Israeli society and the Jewish people.

**Purpose of the Initiative**

1. To nurture a young generation of professional leadership figures for JAFI.
2. To create an organizational infrastructure, knowledge base, and management toolbox for leading change in organizational culture.
3. To lead processes of excellence, innovation, and initiative in the organization.

**The Theory of Change**

 **Basic problem Task Picture of success**

[Diagram labels:]

Jewish identity Screening

Technology Placement and training

Israel Networking

Collective Expanding circles

**Basic problem**: Since 1929, JAFI has been at the forefront of realizing the Zionist vision in Israel and has operated activities world-wide to help the Jewish people. Approaching its seventieth anniversary, Israel is facing growing challenges and threats to its cultural and socioeconomic resilience. In addition, global trends are creating new challenges for Jewish communities around the world, creating unprecedented changes in the condition of the Jewish people and in the mutual relationship between Israel and Diaspora Jewry. Alongside the complex challenges facing Israel and the Jewish people, human progress and technological developments in the digital era are radically transforming familiar methods and strategies in almost every field of human activity.

Together, these three trends are creating instability and raising substantive questions regarding the future of Israel and the Jewish people. This reality is also challenging JAFI’s own function, role, and methods as the collective arm of the Jewish people in the modern era.

**The picture of success**: We believe that leadership plays a crucial role within this modern reality. **Professional leadership**, acting on the foundation of a value-based vision and professional approaches and methods, adapted to modern reality, can shape a new agenda and dramatically influence the future of Israeli society and the Jewish people. The future picture of the Mandel Excellence Program envisions a multi-generational and multidisciplinary network of 24 directors working in various units of JAFI, which will continue to serve as the leading force in the Jewish collective confronting the enormous challenges it faces – in Israel, in the Diaspora, and in the connection between the two.

**The Task**

**Screening**

The program sees the hundreds of shlichot and shlichim (emissaries) who travel each year to Jewish communities around the world as a strategic asset in realizing its purpose. Embarking on shlichut is preceded by a thorough screening and evaluation process, followed by training adapted to different shlichut tracks and to the target country. After completing at least two years of service, shlichim/ot return to Israel with a personal and professional understanding of the Jewish world in all its diversity, together with profound intellectual and emotional bonds to its beauty and its challenges. They also return with professional experience in community leadership and organizational processes in a dynamic, multicultural, and multi-generational environment. The Mandel Excellence Program seeks to locate and screen outstanding candidates from among **returning shlichim/ot** whose work in the field has been marked by a high level of managerial and leadership excellence, initiative and an ability to create and lead cooperation in a complex environment. The program will leverage this formative experience as a foundation for ongoing personal and professional growth; provide a platform for ongoing influence and meaningful action; and essentially enable the participants **to shape and lead the future tasks and positions of JAFI and the Jewish people**.

**The Model Graduate**

Graduates of the program will show profound and extensive knowledge alongside advanced capabilities and core capacities, as follows (according to alphabetical order and not order of importance):

**The Model Graduate**

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| **Aspiration to excellence and constant improvement** | Ability to expand knowledge and skills, improve, and learn from personal and organizational experience. |
| **Cooperation and teamwork**  | Ability to promote cooperation, engage in team work, show attentiveness and tolerance of other opinions and approaches; openness to feedback and criticism. |
| **Creativity** | Ability to think outside the box. Openness to learning and experience in new fields. |
| **Initiative and innovation**  | Leading processes and new ideas to enhance effectiveness. |
| **Intellectual skills** | Strong command of themes relating to Jewish identity; knowledge and profound familiarity with Israeli society and the Jewish people; intellectual curiosity, open-mindedness, and ability to learn. |
| **Leadership and ability to influence** | Good self-expression and persuasion skills; ability to recruit and motivate others; ability to create discourse on values; ability to serve as a personal example and role model; ability to inspire. |
| **Perception of the horizon** | Motivation through vision, educational/social approach, and commitment to a vision of the future (“horizon perception”) as a moral compass. |
| **Quality implementation** | Ability to complete tasks effectively, to advance tasks, and to optimize implementation – ability to “get things done.”  |
| **Systemic perception**  | Understanding and addressing broad organizational contexts; understanding organizational objectives; taking into account organizational factors/interfaces/constraints. |

The above list of criteria and characteristics was developed through an in-depth process in both the main management axes in JAFI, with the assistance of experts and organizational consultants from Pilat. The goal was to distill the core skills needed for success in the organization and for leading internal processes of change. The list was validated by the senior executive and was used by the program both in developing screening tools and in defining the content for the different study tracks.

**Placement and Training**

**Integrating returning shlichim/ot in key functions in JAFI** and nurturing them as the new professional leadership generation in the organization. This will be achieved by means of a training program and individual and group supervision over a two-year period. The educational program includes two study tracks: a group track and an individual track. The **group track** in turn includes two main components: orientation and education. Intra-organizational orientation will be led by the fellows themselves, based on the units in which they work, while the program staff will lead the educational component. The educational component will include closed sessions for the group of fellows as well as activities open to their peers and colleagues, and in some cases to all JAFI staff members. The goal is to facilitate the objectives of networking and to enhance the ripple effect in JAFI as an integral part of the training program.

The **individual track** will be devoted to the professional development and personal growth of each fellow. It will be based on the gap between the requirements of the function and the individual’s knowledge and skills, adapted to the individual’s desires and personality, to the fields that most excite them, and to the learning style that is most effective for them. In addition, each fellow will be matched up with a **mentor** who will offer personal and professional supervision throughout the course of the program.

**Training Model**

The program will be based on the theoretical model of the 4 Cs: Convictions, Connections, Content, Conversation (Yonatan Ariel, “Makom,”) using a spiral format. In other words, in each stage and on every subject we will return to the four basic questions: **Why? What? Who? How?**

This model will be implemented as part of a matrix formed by two axes: the individual axis and the group axis (representing the two tracks in the program that raise questions and issues influencing the shaping of the “model director”) and on the inculcation of the initiative to develop a **learning and vision-oriented organization**. In-depth attention to these issues will offer theoretical knowledge, tools, and practical skills, as well as detailed study of test cases from the world, from Jewish and Zionist fields, and from the field of shlichut (based on peer learning), with a focus on the current situation of Israeli society and the Jewish people:



**Opening Cluster: Why?**

In the opening cluster we will look in depth at issues relating to the **individual, professional, and organizational vision**. We will examine models and alternatives for the “future picture,” reinforcing the fellows’ intellectual skills, creativity, and leadership capabilities. This cluster seeks to enable the fellows to cope in depth with questions of identity, vision, and professional ethics. In the group track, we will also examine vision-oriented leadership using selected case studies and workshops for formulating a vision, shaping policy, and preparing position papers. In the individual track, each participant will focus on relevant core skills for their position, relating to issues of professional identity, the future picture, and the personal motivating theory of change. The individual track will also include the diagnosis and location of needs, alongside workshops in creative writing and effective writing for formulating and expressing personal and professional vision, as well as the translation of theoretical material into tools and practical skills required for success in the position and for leading change in the organization.

**Second Cluster: Who?**

**This cluster examines the diverse target populations with which the participants work, both in Israeli society and among Diaspora Jewry**. The sessions in this cluster will examine issues of leadership and influence, cooperation and teamwork, with attention to such themes as identity and belonging, space and time, values and tradition, technology and communications, and particularism and universalism.

The individual track will focus on closing gaps and providing practical knowledge and skills in the fields of information science, generational theory, contemporary studies on the condition of the Jewish people (and young Jews in particular), competing sociological and demographic analyses concerning the state of Israeli society, including individual meetings with social entrepreneurs active in government ministries, the private sector, and civil society. This stage will also include deeper internal orientation within JAFI.

**Third Cluster: What?**

**This cluster focuses on substantive issues relating to the thematic foundation, fields of content, and practical tools serving the program participants**. The sessions in this cluster examine motivation to action and modalities of action in the context of intellectual and leadership skills and the ability to influence. They also discuss the definition of goals and compliance with objectives, alongside creativity, coping with challenges, quality of implementation, and the perception of the horizon.

In the individual track, the cluster includes further closing of gaps and in-depth study of thematic areas relevant to the fellows’ functions.

**Fourth Cluster: How?**

**This cluster focuses on various issues relating to action and action styles, emphasizing management styles, a systemic perspective, and the meeting of goals**. The sessions in this cluster will examine the synergy between all the theoretical and practical material studied to state, on the one hand, and implementation strategies and tactics for action, on the other. The fourth cluster is more dynamic than the others, and will be built or adjusted according to the fellows’ needs, pace of learning, and professional development. If the group process and ongoing work permit, the fellows will increasingly assume responsibility for determining the content of sessions and the identity of the guest lecturers, in consultation with the program staff and the advisory committee. They will also assume responsibility for the intra-organizational orientation track, which will begin in the second cluster and continue through the end of the third semester. In addition, the fourth cluster will also include in-depth familiarization with Israeli society, both through the encounter places (as detailed below) and through the [unclear] culture units. These units will allow each fellow to bring their own unique story and to consider how it contributes to their work and to realizing the program goals, and/or to meet with various figures within the different “tribes” and sub-cultures in Israeli society and to hear the voices that comprise this society. In addition to the narrative component, each such session will also emphasize the identification of the action strategies, tools, and skills that enable the individuals to act and to achieve success.

**Group Processes**

In addition to the theoretical and practical components of the program, time and effort will also be invested in structuring dynamic processes in the group as a condition for ongoing cooperation and for the successful functioning of the executive network after the program ends. We are convinced that the use of the narrative approach, group counseling tools, reflection, and processing can transform the participants’ involvement in the program into a meaningful and formative experience. The program will also be characterized by a modular format, including multifaceted attention to the individuals in the group, alongside a holistic perception of their function, including integration with managers and peers. The group will be built as an expanding network of agents for change that will empower its internal influence in the organization and the ripple effects on the organization and its work.

**Networking, empowerment, and acceleration** – based on the training and supervision processes, the Mandel Program will function as a professional learning network, empowering existing intra- and extra-organizational networks and offering a platform and practical tools for accelerating the processes of change in organizational culture and for encouraging creativity, initiative, and innovation.

Alongside the investment in the returning shlichim/ot who will integrate as fellows in the Mandel Excellence Program, the program will create an **organizational infrastructure, knowledge base, and management toolbox** used by all the managers in the organization. The program will open some sections of the training and supervision activities for all JAFI staff members in order to involve growing circles in the processes of learning and networking, and to involve them in realizing the picture of success.