Project File: Gap Year Pilot and Jewish Peoplehood Entrepreneurship Accelerator

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A one-year peoplehood project that creates a link between “thirteenth-grade” leadership programs (in Stage 1—annual pre-military *mechinot* [prep schools]) and gap-year programs in order to strengthen Israelis’ knowledge of and sense of belong to the worldwide Jewish communities.

The first circle of participants will be the program leaders themselves. They will attend an entrepreneurship incubator on the topic of peoplehood that will start with a three-day intensive marathon “setup seminar”—yielding a syllabus of encounters among the program trainees and the consolidation of a process to encourage trainees to promote projects of their own.

The trainees, in turn (the second circle), will attend a series of encounters also geared toward entrepreneurship on the theme of peoplehood, which will appeal to broader circles (third circle).

This model will serve as a basis for the development of an operating doctrine of entrepreneurship incubators on the theme of peoplehood, using the training-the-trainers method that will continue to develop and serve the entire field of activity and the full scope of organizations.

In Year 1, the project will be active vis-à-vis twenty programs: ten “thirteenth grade” programs for Israeli participants and ten gap-year programs for participants from the Diaspora.

The project is unique and the first of its kind to be developed between Ami and the Jewish Agency. The cooperation between these institutions will make it possible to rely on years of practical experience and accumulated professional knowledge, allowing for a working doctrine and outcomes that will serve the field in a manner that may reach population groups far beyond those in the circles specified above. Within the Jewish Agency, the project will rely on and be abetted by Kol Ami’s professional mechina programs and the Ami-Unity initiative. The Kol Ami mechinot create a unique encounter between young Israelis and their counterparts from the Diaspora, and develop joint Jewish leadership that aspires to excellence and responsibility for the future of the Jewish people in Israel and abroad. The Ami-Unity initiative, in turn, has been active in recent years in partnership with the most important entities in the educational field, training educators and developing sustainable infrastructures for education in peoplehood and bonding with world Jewry. The Ami-Unity initiative has operated in various ways in the mechina world over the years; this project will produce a significant leap in terms of the scale and depth of activity so as to yield a systematic work plan centering on a connection and a meaningful encounter between young people in leadership programs and the innovative construction of a peoplehood-centered entrepreneurial development incubator in Israel.

1. Target populations

* Israelis
  + First circle: program leaders and educational teams
  + Second circle: program participants— young Israeli leadership
  + Third circle: Israeli population at large (in the trainee programs)
* Diaspora Jews
  + First circle: heads of Masa programs and their counterparts, and gap-year programs’ staff
  + Second circle: participants in gap-year programs: young Diaspora leadership
* Project goals
* Israeli participants:
  + Making the Israeli participants more knowledgeable about world Jewry
  + Nurturing more favorable positions on world Jewry among the Israeli participants
  + Strengthening the Israeli participants’ senses of connection with and belonging to world Jewry
  + Enhancing the Israeli participants’ willingness and motivation to actively become acquainted and connected with world Jewry
  + Shaping and implementing a combined initiative among the various programs in a single project that will strengthen interrelations among the segments of the Jewish people
  + For program leaders: mobilizing them to spearhead a process for their trainees and imparting tools that will allow the programs to continue the process
* Diaspora participants:
  + Strengthening the Diaspora participants’ sense of connection with Israel and Israeli Jews and of belonging to the Jewish people
  + Enhancing the Diaspora participants’ willingness and motivation to be active in relations between Israel and their Jewish communities of origin;
  + Shaping and implementing a combined initiative among the various programs to strengthen the mutual bond between the various segments of the Jewish people
  + For program leaders: mobilizing them to spearhead a process for their trainees and imparting tools that will allow the programs to continue the process

1. Quantifiable objectives / outcomes at the organizational level

* Ten pairs of programs (twenty groups in all)
* Program teams:
  + Opening encounter and intensive three-day setup seminar in which a dedicated program of encounters for each pair will be devised
  + Construction and implementation of the program of encounters and projects that the mechina trainees will run during the year
  + Four additional meetings of the leadership forum during the year
* Trainees:
  + 500–800 trainees, 20–45 from each prorgam
  + At least five joint encounters during the year
* Projects:
  + Initiatives based on the criteria established in the setup seminar;
  + Planning and implementation of the work plan, the encounters, and promotion of initiatives from the Israeli and gap-year program participants during the year
  + Attaining Ami’s impact evaluation targets
* The operating theories behind the accelerator model and the encounters will be accessible to the entire frontline echelon in the form of documents summarizing organizational insights that the project staff will disseminate, including both the organizational and educational operating principles and the financial and logistical aspects as will have been learned and developed. These documents and working principles will be presented at a learning conference that the partners in the project will produce for those in the field.
* Both Ami and the Jewish Agency see the current project as a multiannual endeavor and intend to continue and even expand it to different groups of young people. The cooperative continuation and expansion of the project will depend on the success of the pilot year, the attainment of the objectives, the success of the partnership, and both sides’ wish to continue.

1. Project timetable

| **Month** | **Milestone** | **Comments** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| June 2021 | Approval of the budget, recruitment of main partners, and creation of a program and a call for participants, in conjunction with the Council of Mechinot and the Masa program. | The program will include target dates and explicit commitments on the part of each program. |
| July | Issuance of the call for participants, recruitment of specific gap-year and “thirteenth-grade” programs, selection of participating programs, and pairing the programs. |  |
| August | Preliminary encounter of program leaders (via Zoom or in pairs) | Stage 1 (target population: program leaders) |
| October | Intensive setup seminar for program leaders Internal preparations by each program separately |
| November | Encounter no. 1: first encounter of the paired programs | Stage 2 (target population: participants in the programs) |
| December | Encounter no. 2: second encounter of the paired programs |
| January 2022 | Joint encounter of all participating programs |
| February–March | Encounter no. 3 Ranking of joint initiatives and projects |
| April | Encounter no. 4 | Stage 3 (target population: broad circles) |
| May | Encounter no. 5, national observances + summary for each pair |
| June | Summaries of the programs and leading institutions + final evaluation |  |

1. Evaluation and measurement

* Direct target population: metrics of peoplehood
* Methodology: before-and-after questionnaires.
* What’s being examined?
  + - knowledge
    - views
    - passion
    - behavior (or behavioral intentions)
  + Carried out by means of research and evaluation questionnaires
* Feedback at the performance level: satisfaction, quality of placements, etc.
* Measurement of impact

1. Budget

* **For 2021/22 – Year 1 of the project:** NIS 1,383,000, split equally between Ami and the Jewish Agency (not including evaluation and measurement, which Ami will carry out and fund separately, and a half-time position for program management, support, and supervision, which the Jewish Agency will fund).

| **Expenditure item** | **Pricing** | **Qty.** | **Budget** | **Details** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Management, educational design, pedagogical and content development, and support | | | |  |
| Educational director for the program | 19,000 | 12 | 228,000 | A full-time post at the Jewish Agency for the project: support and group formation, constructing an educational plan for the leadership forum, educational support for mechina staff, planning at the development lab. (In addition—the Jewish Agency will provide educational management at the scope of a 50% part-time position.) |
| R&D—encounters area | 450 | 70 | 31,500 | To be carried out by a team of researchers jointly facilitated by Ami and the Jewish Agency. The calculation is based on 70 work-hours at 450 NIS per hour: 10 hours for mapping meetings, 30 work hours (literature review, mapping process), 10 hours for writing up a mapping report, and 20 hours for writing up the model, including the operating doctrine. |
| External professional support | 500 | 40 | 20,000 | Support and supervision of integrating the paired programs’ projects |
| Producing and writing educational programs and work plans for joint programs and the field at large | 30,000 | 2 | 60,000 | A writing team composed of two content experts who will write up a comprehensive presentation of the operating doctrine for the encounters, for use by the joint programs as an anchor for their continued endeavors. |
| Translation, production, and design of educational materials for the partners’ use | 100 | 800 | 80,000 | 100 NIS per trainee for high-quality training materials and aids in Hebrew and English for use in studying, training for, and implementing the project. |
| Management at the Council of Mechinot and Masa | 9000 | 2 | 18,000 | The Council of Mechinot and the Masa program, as the main partners, will task a staff member with integrating the program and the logistics and assimilating the activity into their agenda in coming years. |
| Setup and development marathon for paired program leaders | | | |  |
| Facilitators for development labs | 16,500 | 2 | 33,000 | Two expert facilitators per design lab for support of the process |
| Logistics marathon for educators | 15,000 | 1 | 15,000 | Activity rooms, guest lecturers, mentors, busing |
| Room and board | 850 | 25 | 21,250 | Two nights for all program leaders and facilitators |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Development of projects and support for work plan | | | |  |
| Intra-program educational and logistical support | 4,000 | 20 | 80,000 | Each program will task a staff member with handling the preparation days, producing a work plan, verifying the work plan, developing and promoting it, and supporting the advancement of the project. |
| Educational support | 1,000 | 20 | 20,000 | Educational support for the paired programs—including training for the teams from the mechinot and leading trainees, and consultation in program implementation. |
| Project support | 2,000 | 10 | 20,000 | Rating the projects, selecting the projects, and determining the extent of funding—undertaken in March and determined on the basis of document and of work plan presentations by the leading trainees. |
| Reciprocal hospitality \* | | | |  |
| Buses | 2,500 | 4 | 100,000 |  |
| Meals | 100 | 4 | 160,000 | Four encounters in a reciprocal hospitality format, alternating between the overseas program hosting the “thirteenth grade” and vice versa. There will be a joint outing for each pair (10 overseas programs and ten “thirteenth grades”). |
| Workshops | 1,000 | 10 | 10,000 |
| Paired outing\* | | | |  |
| Buses | 2,500 | 20 | 100,000 | It may be better to allow each pair (mechina and Masa program) to choose an activity from the set of goals for the project. In such a case, the total cost per trainee will not exceed NIS 650. Budgeting depends on presenting the project administration with a program and an up-to-date budget. |
| Guide | 1,000 | 20 | 40,000 |
| Guards | 800 | 20 | 32,000 |
| Meals | 50 | 800 | 80,000 |
| Joint seminar for all participants | | | |  |
| Venue | 20,000 | 1 | 20,000 |  |
| Buses | 2,500 | 20 | 50,000 |  |
| Meals | 70 | 800 | 56,000 |  |
| Lectures, workshops, and facilitators | 40,000 | 1 | 40,000 |  |
| Branding | 20 | 800 | 16,000 |  |
| Evaluation and dissemination of findings and knowledge in | | | |  |
| Evaluation of the project |  | 1 | – | By an outside evaluator—a design evaluation from which the teams may learn and optimize the programs |
| National conference for sharing the findings | 20,000 | 1 | 20,000 | Conference cooperatively run by Ami and the Jewish Agency for wide dissemination of findings and knowledge |
| Graphic design, printing, etc. | 33,000 | 1 | 33,000 |  |
| **Total** |  |  | **1,383,750** |  |

1. Mapping the current situation in the field

A meaningful effort to produce a complete and comprehensive map of the field is under way today, as is known. Therefore, we focus below on describing Jewish-peoplehood initiatives at the mechinot and the gap-year programs.

At the national level, the only program that promotes peoplehood at the pre-military mechinot was undertaken as part of the Jewish Agency’s Ami-Unity initiative. It included several national conferences, one-off encounters between Israeli and Diaspora young people, and an in-service activity in this domain for the mechina students.

Under the Yahad program, overseas students attend mechinot all over Israel. Only in the current year, due work carried out in collaboration with Ami-Unity, there was a systematic effort made to use these students as a peoplehood resource within the mechina. It turned out that at many mechinot, even though the participants study together, a large majority spoke little of their parent communities and received neither the forum nor the tools to share their story and the experience of Jewish life outside Israel. As part of Ami-Unity’s activity in the past year, overseas students were trained to be agents of change at the mechina and were given a platform and tools for sharing. The expectation is that there will be some eighty-five overseas students in the mechinot countrywide next year.

Beyond this national initiative, various mechinot and Masa programs interrelate sporadically and locally to arrange encounters between young Israelis and Diaspora Jews. These get-togethers are few in number and unaffiliated with any comprehensive program; by and large, they do not promote a systematic plan that might encourage cross-continental Jewish leadership to emerge.

The Jewish Agency’s Kol Ami network of mechinot, which has operated since 2012, is the only program of its kind seamlessly integrating young Israelis and their peers from the entire Jewish world. Some 300 young Diaspora Jews take part in the organization’s eight mechinot each year. The purpose of the mechina is to develop joint Israeli and Diaspora young leadership. This leadership development is undertaken amid an in-depth Jewish-Zionist leadership discourse that produces a social network aspiring to excellence and assumption of responsibility in order to influence the future of the Jewish people.