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# OUR RA

## STRATEGIC PLAN

# 2017-2022

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10 BOLD STATEMENTS OF STRATEGIC INTENT

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 **OUR HEVRUTA**

 **OUR CAREERS**

 **OUR STRENGTH**

 **OUR TORAH**

 **OUR INNOVATION**

 **OUR TRUTHS**

 **OUR ISRAEL**

 **OUR MEMBERSHIP**

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 **OUR SUSTAINABILITY**

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 **OUR RA**

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10 BOLD STATEMENTS OF STRATEGIC INTENT

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# BOLD STATEMENTS OF STRATEGIC INTENT

Since its founding more than a century ago, the Rabbinical Assembly has served as the professional association for the Conservative/Masorti movement's rabbis, helping each new generation gain the connections and knowledge needed for meaningful service. Our RA's strategic plan seeks to uphold the vital contributions of our predecessors while building an organization more attuned to the demands of today. Our RA embraces the diversity of Conservative/Masorti rabbis' work and life situations, encourages members to take a larger part in directing our RA's activities, and magnifies our impact in the wider world by collaborating with other institutions.

This plan results from the work of our Vision Team, which engaged over 900 rabbis to develop a collective vision for the future of our RA. After intensive dialogue and immersions, our 50-member Vision Team, taking into account the multiplicity of voices and members' intentions, created 10 Bold Statements of Strategic Intent to express the strategic direction of our RA moving into its future.

**675** SURVEY RESPONDENTS

**250** ONE-ON-ONE CONVERSATIONS

**37** CLUSTER & REGION MEETINGS

**10** BOLD STATEMENTS

**OUR RA** has grouped the 10 bold statements under 3 headings:



1

SUPPORTING AND STRENGTHENING RABBIS



2

BEING A FORCE FOR CIVILITY, PLURALISM AND GOOD IN ISRAEL AND THE WORLD



3

CO-CREATING A MODEL TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY ORGANIZATION

## 1 SUPPORTING AND STRENGTHENING RABBIS

Our RA provides a wide variety of opportunities for colleagues to support one another in all aspects of our lives, offering a strong network of support for rabbis across all existing streams of rabbinic work, while supporting the creation of new ones. This also includes sustained opportunities for enrichment through Torah study. We are moving from an organization that focused on providing services to one focused instead on being conveners of rabbis and supporting them.

 **OUR HEVRUTA**

 **OUR CAREERS**  
לעלא וועלא - CAREER DEVELOPMENT

 **OUR STRENGTH**

 **OUR TORAH**  
תורה אור - TORAH ENLIGHTENS THE WORLD

 **OUR INNOVATION**

## 2 BEING A FORCE FOR CIVILITY, PLURALISM AND GOOD IN ISRAEL AND THE WORLD

Recognizing the leadership opportunities for our rabbis in an increasingly polarized public discourse on Israel and other issues of crucial importance, the Vision Team charged our RA with fostering a climate of civility and pluralism. We will share our unique approaches to *inyana d'yoma* through our multiple understandings of Torah.

 **OUR TRUTHS**  
דובר אמת - SPEAKING TRUTH

 **OUR ISRAEL**  
עין לציון - AN EYE TOWARD ZION: ISRAEL

## 3 CO-CREATING A MODEL TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY ORGANIZATION

Our Vision Team articulated a new vision of our RA, built on creating a truly global network of leaders, volunteers and staff jointly engaged in cooperative work and mutual support with a culture driven by transparency, empowerment of members, *derekh erez*, openness and respect. Our RA seeks opportunities for partnership with other organizations and actively builds financial sustainability through philanthropy and resource development.

 **OUR MEMBERSHIP**  **OUR PARTNERSHIP**  
ברית - MEMBERSHIP AS ברית

 **OUR SUSTAINABILITY**  
קמח ותורה - SUSTENANCE IN TORAH

Beneath these 10 bold statements lie

# KEY SHIFTS

that represent a new “center of gravity” in terms of how we engage our membership, moving us forward:



## FACILITATING RELATIONSHIPS

among rabbis for our shared growth and support.



A more **EXPANSIVE VISION** of the variety of rabbinic career paths including education, advocacy, chaplaincy, Hillel, camping, organizational leadership and scholarship.



## A NETWORKED ORGANIZATION

of distributed leadership, driven by members but supported by professionals.



An **ACCESSIBLE, OPEN, TRANSPARENT** organizational model.



Increased **STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS.**



A more **GLOBAL ORGANIZATION.**

*This document lays out how we are beginning to realize these bold statements.*



# OUR HEVRUTA



Our RA recognizes that our diversity is our strength that we foster through connection. We create intimate common interest and affinity groups that connect our membership to strengthen us individually and as a whole. We foster a culture of care, concern and mutual respect. In doing so, our RA becomes a whole greater than the sum of its parts.

## BIG IDEA

*As rabbis, we view relationships as the heart of our RA, allowing us to share our struggles and triumphs. Among the most important indicators of the success of our RA are the number, strength and value of our relationships. This Bold Statement shifts the focus of our RA to co-creating a structured, networked RA that attends to the connections among colleagues in all rabbinic professions globally.*

## KEY STRATEGIES

- **Develop affinity groups and global regions/clusters.** Support and grow affinity groups and vibrant clusters and regions through the Commission for a Vital and Connected Rabbinate.
- **Encourage opportunities for connection.** Provide opportunities for RA members to have deep and enriching connections with other RA members.
- **Use community-organizing techniques and networking.** Connect rabbis to one another and empower them to take collective action around shared purposes and interests.
- **Develop technology platforms.** Invest in communication, collaboration, connection, membership and volunteer management technology and other platforms to foster connections. Create mechanisms for RA colleagues to know each other's stories, talents and passions.
- **Create a global structure.** Sustain and support the regional differences and needs of our members in Israel, North America, South America, Europe and wherever they serve.



# OUR CAREERS

## לעלא ולעלא - CAREER DEVELOPMENT



Recognizing the uniqueness and sanctity of multiple expressions of one's rabbinate, our RA looks after the career advancement of Conservative/Masorti rabbis around the globe in all fields throughout their lifetime. Our RA takes the lead through advocacy, relationship building and skills training to identify and expand opportunities for rabbis in all fields. Our RA provides individual and group opportunities for mentorship, coaching, skill development and career planning in order to help rabbis maximize their potential for professional success, satisfaction and career advancement. Our RA challenges its members to approach their career development with reflection, feedback and honest communication.

### BIG IDEA

*Traditionally, pulpit rabbis have looked to the RA as the key resource for job placement and salary negotiation. The 40 percent of rabbis working outside the pulpit—in education, chaplaincy, camping, advocacy, organizational leadership, Hillel, etc.—need support as much as pulpit rabbis. Further, rabbis need career support along the continuum of their careers—from their student days, through job transitions in many areas of the rabbinate and often multiple stages of retirement.*

### KEY STRATEGIES

- **Support the diversity of rabbinic careers.** Create a Global Career Development Center along with a Rabbinic Career Development Commission to focus on professional development, career planning and transition assistance.
- **Create mechanisms for compassionate career coaching.** In hevrutot and small groups, focus on these transitions: hiring, promotion, job change, retirement and entrepreneurship.
- **Create an online career resource center.** Provide access to jobs and career development resources that are current, easy to use and relevant for rabbis at various stages of life.
- **Market career services effectively.** Offer to all types of rabbinic careers and all stages of the rabbinate.



# OUR STRENGTH



Recognizing the unique nature of the rabbi's role in carrying the emotional and spiritual weight of others and the rabbi's challenges of experiencing personal life as a public figure, our RA is dedicated to creating a web of interpersonal relationships among its members, fostering a sense that each of us is responsible for the other. From a caring pastoral perspective, our RA supports rabbis through day-to-day stress and through major transitions and crises so that each rabbi feels supported, valued and validated. Our RA extends its support to all our members, as well as their families in times of need.

### BIG IDEA

*What rabbis need and want most is support—from each other and from their professional organization. Rabbis have many shared interests and need a structure to connect to each other and to appropriate resources. Our RA is committed to providing the structure that facilitates this support.*

### KEY STRATEGIES

- **Extra support to rabbis in transition and crisis.** Develop systems to identify and support these colleagues.
- **Professional consultation.** Make professional support available to members.
- **Crowdsource and curate content.** Support rabbis in areas of increasing significance—including *keruv*, interfaith dialogue, political discourse, social justice, spirituality and wellness.
- **Provide relevant spiritual, professional and leadership development.** Aid rabbis seeking partnerships with other organizations.
- **Create sacred spaces.** Help rabbis to connect, explore and disagree with one another globally, regionally and along lines of interest areas—in person and online.



# OUR TORAH

תורה אור - TORAH ENLIGHTENS THE WORLD



Our RA fosters a culture of Torah study that nourishes its members spiritually and intellectually. We focus the light of Torah through all that we do. We actively motivate members and engage in regular Torah study, create learning opportunities through partnerships, and share Torah content we create and content created by our colleagues. Our RA derives its collective strength and its authority from the Torah study of our members.

## BIG IDEA

*Torah is our life source. Our members see each other as resources of Torah. Our RA is a place where rabbis can continually turn to replenish our own wells after ordination.*

## KEY STRATEGIES

- **Continue to publish Torah** and associated web-based resources, programming and guidance.
- **Crowdsource and curate relevant Torah** by and for RA Rabbis to use with our communities.
- **Connect and promote high-quality Torah-based learning experiences**, teaching materials and rabbinic resources.
- **Create Our RA Torah study spaces.** Offer mini-retreats and other Torah study spaces—in person and online—for all rabbinic populations globally.



# OUR INNOVATION



Our RA celebrates, embraces and encourages innovation. In the 21st century, our Torah will be learned and lived through the efforts of our rabbis in a variety of settings, inside and outside of existing Conservative Movement institutions, in every part of the world. Therefore, our focus is on both stimulating new, entrepreneurial models of Jewish community and experience, as well as encouraging those colleagues engaged in the renewal and rethinking of existing institutions. We will inspire the creativity of our colleagues through training in entrepreneurial practice and change management, sharing of best practices and successful models, facilitating communication among those doing innovative work, and assistance developing financial support.

## BIG IDEA

*Innovation allows us to renew ourselves and our work. We strive to highlight the work of Conservative rabbis engaging in path-breaking Jewish leadership. We will use our energy and talents to revitalize the places and spaces our rabbis lead.*

## KEY STRATEGIES

- **Highlight models of innovative and effective practice** of RA members.
- **Communicate openly about our shifts, our challenges and our accomplishments** as Jewish change-makers.
- **Support and cultivate entrepreneurial thinking, risk-taking and renewal of legacy institutions.** Form networks of colleagues seeking to do creative work, hold up examples of innovation, and offer inspiration to ask deep questions and think differently about new structures and the renewal of legacy institutions.
- **Focus on leading change in sharing resources and professional development.** Provide resources, reading groups and access to certifications to help rabbis better drive change.
- **Secure grants and incubate innovation and renewal.** Assist colleagues in their search for funding and mentorship.

# STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW

## 1 SUPPORTING AND STRENGTHENING RABBIS

### STAYING THE SAME

- Help individual rabbis through challenging times
- Advocate for rabbis in the complex relationships of their workplaces
- Support rabbis in placement
- Provide rabbinic guides and processing groups
- Strengthen relationships through regions and clusters
- Use our collective knowledge to enrich the lives and experiences of Conservative rabbis
- Curate placement lists
- Offer career coaching

### POTENTIALLY DEEPENING

- Expand and support affinity groups to diverse populations, global geographies and along colleagues' interests
- Empower colleagues to support each other around placement/career and personal life
- Create safe spaces for rabbis to explore and grow
- Engage rabbinical students, newly ordained rabbis and retired rabbis more intentionally
- Make conventions more interactive, more focused on personal growth, *hevruta*, dialogue

### CONSIDERING DOING DIFFERENTLY

- Provide career support for chaplains, educators, Hillel, advocates, academics, Jewish professionals, camping, etc.
- Create the conditions for rabbis to support each other, in addition to offering support from a central office
- Invest in technology platforms for membership connection
- Use partnerships to access educational and Torah resources
- Provide more resources to help rabbis stay current, innovate and manage change.
- Help rabbis become successful entrepreneurs—in new jobs and inside current jobs
- Crowdfund member resources
- Lift up the work of innovators among us as potential models
- Look for new ways spread our Torah through publication

### STILL EXPLORING

- What it means to be an international organization
- Developing technology platforms that best meet our needs
- Convening our colleagues
- Creating a more networked organization

## 2 BEING A FORCE FOR CIVILITY, PLURALISM AND GOOD IN ISRAEL AND THE WORLD



# OUR TRUTHS

## דובר אמת - SPEAKING TRUTH



Our RA has a sacred responsibility to the Jewish people and the world to bring our rabbinic voice to the pressing public conversations of our time. Our Torah seeks to make a difference in how issues are understood. We take responsibility to raise the level of civil discourse in our communities while empowering rabbis to take a vocal stance.

### BIG IDEA

*To help us serve our constituents, our RA will provide a sacred space for the exchange of insights, thoughts and action ideas on social justice, Israel and other issues of the day. By listening to the diverse voices in our movement, we will be better equipped to present a range of views.*

### KEY STRATEGIES

- **Cultivate a clear rabbinic Our RA voice** on public issues that elevates the conversation, offers our distinct perspective and earns us a role in policy and public conversation by, in part, relationship-building with local media, community leaders and elected officials.
- **Increase participation by our members in the resolutions process.**
- **Create methods to increase the impact of our resolutions on the public.**
- **Issue joint statements** with other arms of the Conservative/Masorti Movement and other organizations.
- **Empower colleagues to become *dovrei emet*** by:
  - Training, supporting and assisting colleagues to be a moral voice for their communities and to take responsibility for the formulation of their own policy perspectives;
  - Sharing rabbinic resources created by our members;
  - Creating better RA platforms for productive dialogue on issues of the day; and
  - Facilitating partnerships with aligned social justice and advocacy organizations.
- **Take collective action.** Use statements as platforms for collective action, both among rabbis and in partnership with other organizations and faith groups.





# OUR ISRAEL

עין לציון - AN EYE TOWARD ZION: ISRAEL



Our RA is committed and dedicated to Zionism, the State of Israel and Masorti Judaism as a means for strengthening a democratic and pluralistic Israeli society. We promote respectful, thoughtful and honest dialogue regarding the complexities of Israel's social and political realities.

## BIG IDEA

*Zionist from the outset, Masorti/Conservative Judaism asserts that a united future for the Jewish people is dependent upon strong ties between Jews in and outside Israel. Despite our members' legitimate differences on Israeli policy, we work together, around the world, to ensure authentic options for Jewish life in Israel and ties for Jews around the world to the Jewish state.*

## KEY STRATEGIES

- **Foster a love of Israel** and promote productive dialogue about the Jewish state among our members and their constituents, so strengthening Conservative/Masorti Judaism around the world.
- **Create connections between our members** in Israel and abroad, providing platforms and immersive experiences for enriching ties and deepening understanding of Jewish life in Israel and around the world.
- **Assist the growth of Masorti Judaism in Israel** and advocate to secure political support for the movement and religious pluralism in Israel and the recognition by Israel of pluralistic Judaism abroad.
- **Continue to act as a major catalyst** in the political arena of religious pluralism in Israel, in national and international forums.
- **Encourage our members to produce and distribute materials** that represent the gamut of views on the centrality of Israel in Judaism.

# STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW

## STAYING THE SAME

- Maintain public presence of RA in the larger world through resolutions, public statements, public speaking
- Keep a "seat at the table" on issues that benefit from rabbinic perspective
- Showcase the work of our Israeli colleagues
- Commit to Israel and pluralism

## POTENTIALLY DEEPENING

- Make strategic choices around when to take positions
- Enhance civil discourse
- Offer our Conservative/Masorti Movement perspective
- Take positions grounded in our Torah
- Build capacity of rabbis to take positions locally
- Create forums for rabbis to share positions and texts on difficult issues
- Find creative ways, using technology, to improve members' participation in resolutions
- Issue more joint resolutions and statements with Conservative Movement partners
- Build stronger ties between Israeli and Diaspora rabbis and institutions
- Deepen involvement of Masorti/Conservative Jews in advocacy for Jewish religious pluralism in Israel and the strengthening of Masorti institutions

## CONSIDERING DOING DIFFERENTLY

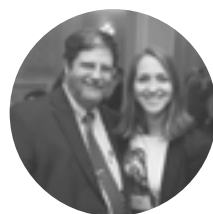
- Create groups of diverse rabbis to study and proactively formulate positions and generate content
- Focus more on providing resources on public issues to rabbis
- Take positions on issues locally and globally, reflecting the geographic diversity of our membership
- Find ways for all colleagues to feel heard
- Focus on building skills of dialogue and civility on polarizing issues

## STILL EXPLORING

- Becoming a unifying presence on issues related to Israel
- Transcending our focus on US and Israel in our policy positions and advocacy, adopting appropriate positions in other countries as well
- Representing minority viewpoints

# OUR MEMBERSHIP

## ברית - MEMBERSHIP AS ברית



Our RA exists as a result of the covenantal relationship among our members. Success requires our members to take initiative, commit to being involved and to collaborate to determine the agenda of our RA. We have mutual obligations to one another that include acting with *derekh erez* and *hesed*. We are transparent and communicate information to achieve our mutual goals. Our professionals are our partners and facilitators who connect and support us in our work.

### BIG IDEA

*Our RA will spearhead a cultural shift to a co-created organizational model. Our RA belongs to all of us, and members and professionals must share responsibilities for sustaining and strengthening our RA. We will create new professional and governance structures for a relational and networked organization committed to supporting productive, thriving, healthy places for rabbis to convene and collaborate virtually and in person. We also will renew our commitment to transparency.*

### KEY STRATEGIES

- **Take intentional measures to create a culture of *derekh erez* and *hesed*** with mutual respect, inclusion and a relational culture.
- **Co-create a membership *brit*** that is explicit about what it asks of each colleague and reinforces the benefits of membership.
- **Staff for a relational, networked RA.** Embed network leadership competencies in all roles (professional staff and lay leadership/volunteers) and align reporting structures.
- **Organize governance toward an engaged membership.**
- **Ensure all policymaking processes are clear, transparent, inclusive** and align with our Bold Statements.
- **Develop effective data management systems** so that we can increase opportunities to support each other.

# OUR PARTNERSHIP



Our RA collaborates, cooperates and co-creates with the Conservative Movement and other organizations to maximize the capacity of Our RA to support our members and the work they do.

### BIG IDEA

*Conservative Jews look to us collectively for vision, guidance and inspiration. With the tasks before the Jewish people and our rabbis, we cannot go it alone. We are stronger in partnership and therefore seek to create opportunities to learn from expert teachers and share our knowledge with our RA.*

### KEY STRATEGIES

- **Develop and publicize Our RA partnership mindset, infrastructure and relationships.**
- **Solicit, deepen and expand movement partnerships, along with allied organizations.**
- **Provide continuing education and rabbinic resources** in partnership with effective leaders in professional development and Torah study.



# OUR SUSTAINABILITY

קמח ותורה - SUSTENANCE IN TORAH



Our RA cultivates an environment of philanthropy in order to advance our mission and to realize our vision. Members and professionals partner to actively secure the financial sustainability and growth of the RA's capacity to support the creative work of its rabbis around the world.

## BIG IDEA

*Our RA is a vital organization for the support and education of rabbis in the 21st century. We are responsible for our own financial sustainability and have the opportunity to be creative in ensuring our financial future.*

## KEY STRATEGIES

- **Cultivate a mindset of investment in our future** by establishing an advancement committee to seek philanthropic gifts from members and their constituencies.
- **Broaden our fundraising portfolio** by seeking grants from foundations, gifts and bequests from individual donors.
- **Develop a robust communication strategy** to raise the awareness and excitement for supporting Our RA.
- **Develop a financial sustainability plan** that integrates publication revenue, reserve funds, dues, grants, publication dedications and fundraising income.

# STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW

## STAYING THE SAME

- Meet and build relationships with counterpart organizations, including on issues regarding Israel and the world
- Use technology to bring colleagues together
- Maintain current fundraising efforts for convention, publications, etc.
- Be an innovator in the world of liturgic publications
- Strive to create a meaningful approach to Jewish tradition

## POTENTIALLY DEEPENING

- Examine, enrich and promote volunteer opportunities within our RA
- Expand leadership opportunities
- Strengthen relationships with movement and other strategic partners—focused on collaborations and bringing resources to members
- Invest in infrastructure, especially technology for communication, connecting, and contact resource management
- Develop donor relationships

## CONSIDERING DOING DIFFERENTLY

- Developing membership brit
- Establishing more strategic partnerships
- Promoting a culture of risk-taking
- Shifting to a networked assembly
- Fostering a culture of co-creation
- Creating an environment of engagement and participation
- Publishing an annual end-of-year budget report for our members
- Creating a culture of *derekh eretz* and *hesed*

## STILL EXPLORING

- Considering changes to professional and governance structures and practices
- Developing sustainable financial plan that involves dues, publications, grants, fundraising, and investment income to support current and expanded priorities and programs
- Developing foundation and grant protocols
- Increasing member contributions, fee for service revenue, foundation grants
- Creating structure for development efforts
- Exploring structure of our membership fees



 **OUR RA**

[rabbinicalassembly.org](http://rabbinicalassembly.org)