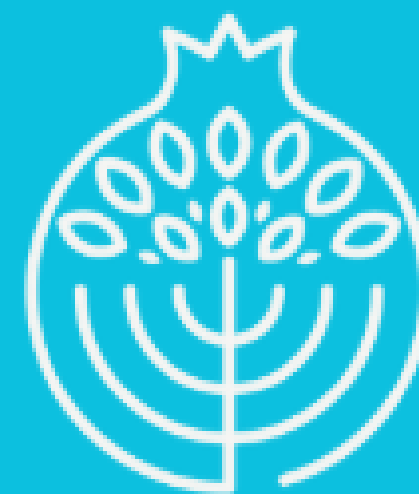
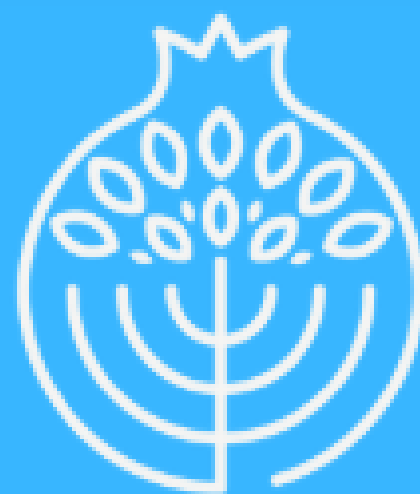


EarlyJ's Strategic Plan





Agenda

Introduction	3
Vision	4
Mission	4
Purpose Statement	4
Approach	5
Theory of Change	6
Strategic Focus	7
Priority 1: Continue our foundational Bay Area work	8
Priority 2: Scale our impact in new markets	11
Priority 3: Elevate the field	13
Priority 4: Experiment with new approaches that accelerate our impact	16
Priority 5: Build our internal capacity	19

Introduction

Jewish Early Childhood Education (Jewish ECE) is the gateway to a vibrant Jewish future. Our families need and deserve an experience that nurtures our children, Jewish identities, and broader communities. EarlyJ champions this vision by innovatively investing in Jewish ECE. We recognize that to achieve our goals, we must influence the multiple, interconnected pillars within a Jewish ECE ecosystem: enrollment capacity, educational quality, the workforce, family engagement, and affordability.

In our first 2 years, we supported transformative initiatives across various pillars, impacting 48 preschools, nearly 600 educators, and more than 2,500 children. Our work has contributed to a 7.9% increase in Jewish preschool enrollment. We engaged 10% of Jewish early childhood educators in the Bay Area in leadership programs. Notably, 5% of educators are receiving or on a pathway to receiving higher compensation—ensuring greater recognition for their vital work and improving the retention of our best educators.

Beyond these measurable outcomes, we also

sparked a wave of energy and momentum throughout the sector, setting the stage for similar inroads in other communities across the country.

Now, more than ever, EarlyJ is poised to further elevate the field, bringing Jewish ECE to the forefront of the conversation in the Jewish community and among philanthropists. We will build upon our data-driven framework and unique approach to deepen impact in the Bay Area, expand our programmatic offerings, broaden our reach to new communities across the U.S., starting with LA, and build our internal capacity to support this growth. While focusing on these new strategic endeavors, we will not lose sight of our thoughtfully cultivated work by continuing to invest in our 4 core pillars:

- Growing preschool capacity
- Investing in educators
- Enhancing family engagement
- Increasing access and affordability

We believe these thoughtful next steps over the coming 5 years will propel us towards our vision of widespread, high-quality Jewish ECE, and promote recognition of Jewish ECE's important role in cultivating Jewish life.

This strategic plan outlines the clear steps EarlyJ will take to advance our key priorities and continue leading the way in Jewish ECE. It details our goals to strengthen collaborations, refine education models, and introduce an updated theory of change that will guide our investment decisions. Together, these strategies reflect EarlyJ's dedication to an adaptable, thoughtful approach that will benefit the broader community. As a result of this careful planning process, the EarlyJ board and team are poised to expand our impact while maintaining our high standards of excellence and measurable results. We are ready to shift the conversation about Jewish ECE, focusing on its long-term potential and setting a powerful example for others to follow. We are excited and honored to take this next step. We invite you to join us in planting the seeds for the future of the Jewish community.

Warmly,

Sharona Israeli Roth
Founding President &
Executive Director, EarlyJ





Vision

The next generation of Jews is activated by a Jewish ECE system that fosters transformative and enriching experiences for families.



Mission

EarlyJ is a catalyst for the Jewish ECE ecosystem by accelerating reach, quality, and impact through strategic investments.

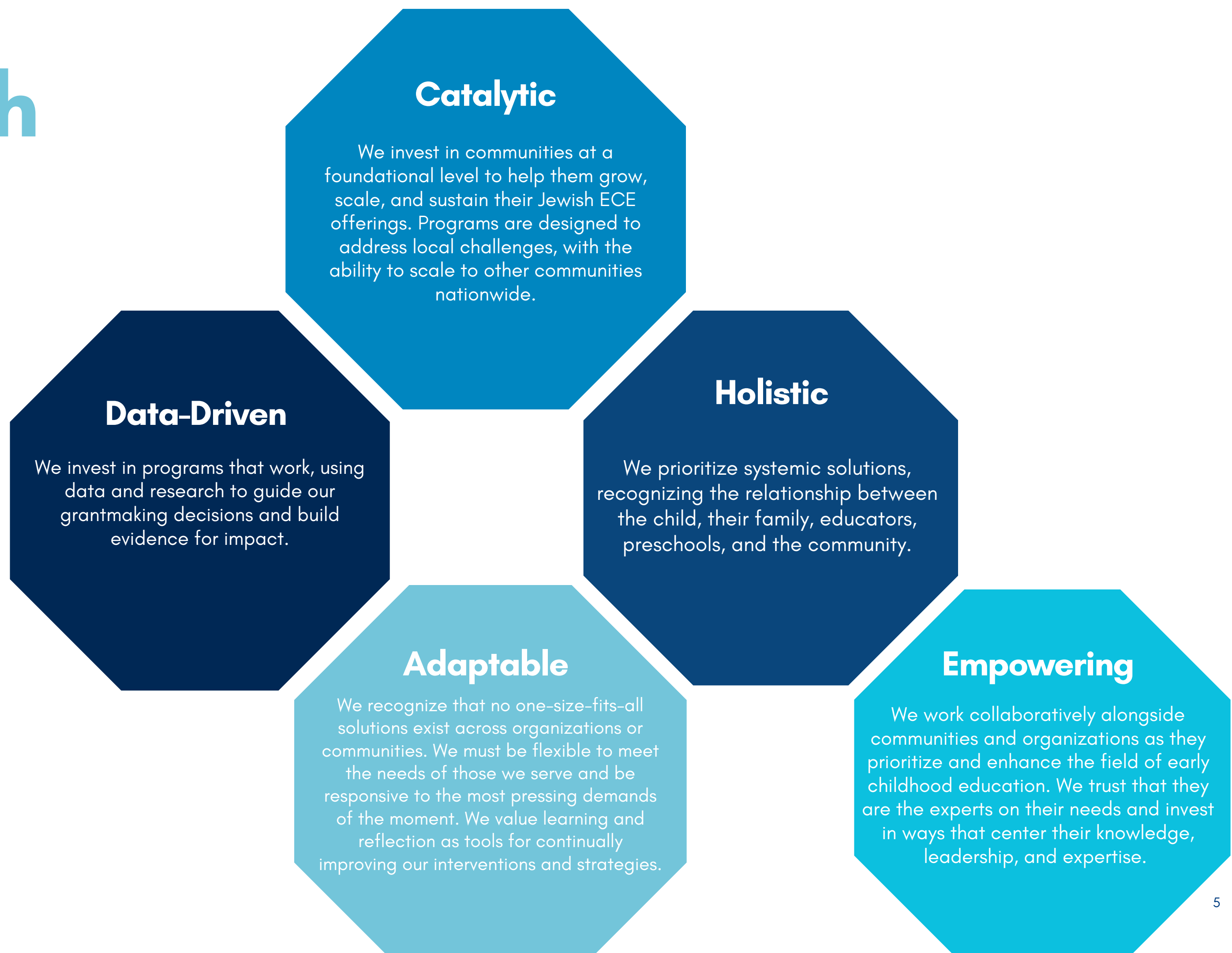


Purpose

EarlyJ activates local ecosystems by investing in Jewish ECE, enabling communities to better nurture Jewish children and families. Through strategic grant-making, a focus on sustainability, and tailored support, we equip communities with the tools and frameworks to drive their own growth and thrive both during and long after our partnership.



Approach



Theory of Change

Our theory of change demonstrates how our approach and activities will produce the outcomes that lead to our vision.

EarlyJ is a catalyst for the Jewish ECE ecosystem by accelerating reach, quality, and impact through strategic investments.

Mission

Approach

Audience & Activities

Short-term Outcomes

Long-Term Outcomes

Vision

We are a data-driven, deliberative organization, looking to catalyze scalable and sustainable solutions to the challenges of Jewish early childhood systems. We invest in and empower communities to develop holistic and adaptable approaches to high-quality, accessible Jewish education.

Early Childhood Organizations

We invest in Jewish ECE organizations to enhance quality, expand student capacity, and build financial sustainability.

- Jewish ECE quality is improved
- There are more seats open at existing Jewish preschools
- New Jewish preschools are opened
- Organizations are better resourced
- Families are attracted to Jewish ECE

- Jewish ECE organizations are self-sustaining and at capacity
- Jewish ECE organizations benefit from a stronger teacher pipeline and regularly retain passionate, qualified educators

Educators

We make grants to elevate educator quality, retention, and compensation.

- Educators enjoy competitive salaries, strong benefits packages, and accessible opportunities for continued education

Families

We strengthen family engagement through community-building initiatives.

- Jewish families feel connected to one another
- Families engage with Jewish teachings, practice, or community in their lives
- Jewish families are more engaged in the Jewish communal sector

- Jewish families are committed to ongoing Jewish identity exploration through Jewish ECE
- Jewish families ground their lives in Jewish wisdom
- Jewish families are more connected to their Jewish communities and Israel

The Field

We collate research, share findings, and create opportunities to promote the field of Jewish ECE locally and nationally.

- Jewish ECE is understood as a critical part of Jewish identity formation
- Stakeholders can articulate and promote Jewish ECE's unique value
- More funding is directed to the Jewish ECE sector

- Jewish ECE is prioritized by community leaders and funders
- More resources are committed to the field
- The Jewish ecosystem reaps the value of stronger Jewish ECE
- The Jewish ECE sector benefits from long-term, sustainable funding

The next generation of Jews is activated by a Jewish ECE system that fosters transformative and enriching experiences for families.

Strategic Focus

To make progress towards our vision in the next 5 years, we will focus on the following 5 objectives:



Continue our foundational Bay Area work



Scale our impact in new markets



Elevate the field



Experiment with new approaches that accelerate our impact



Build our internal capacity



Priority 1: Continue our foundational Bay Area work

In addition to growing our reach, elevating the Jewish ECE field, and piloting new interventions, we will continue to allocate time and resources towards our current organizational endeavors. Our 4 core pillars, which have guided EarlyJ since its inception, serve as the roadmap for these efforts.





To support Priority 1, we will:

A. Grow preschool capacity

- Provide grants to new and established preschools to increase enrollment and support capacity-building.

B. Invest in preschool educators

- Continue our partnership with American Jewish University to invest in the Early Childhood Higher Education Program. We will support teachers as they earn their master's degrees in Jewish ECE, covering 90% of tuition costs and increasing their salaries.
- Collaborate with Oranim College in Israel to allow more educators to participate in the Early Childhood Jewish & Israel Cultural Ambassador Program. Through this program, Bay Area educators will embark on a 17-day immersive seminar in Israel, where they will meet with Israeli educators and immerse themselves in Israeli culture while focusing on early childhood education. Upon completing the program, Bay Area educators will receive a bonus, academic credit, and the title "Jewish & Israel Cultural Ambassador."
- Find dynamic and forward-thinking opportunities to continue our support of preschool educators and invest in Jewish ECE leadership (e.g., the Z3 Leadership Lab).

C. Enhance family engagement

- Support innovative and impactful programs that build relationships with young families. This might include the PJ Library Connectors Program, Music by Heart, other enterprises with strong programmatic partners, or our own unique initiatives.
- Explore developing a new Jewish parent-teacher association that will include representatives from Jewish preschools across the Bay Area.
- Explore new opportunities for family engagement, such as a family camp weekend for Jewish ECE families.

D. Increase access and affordability

- Assess scholarship funding needs across preschools; consider offering need-based tuition assistance.
- Explore models for preschools to provide incentive grants for families to expand enrollment.

E. Support the Bay Area Jewish ECE field

- Meet with Bay Area preschool administrators and educators regularly to stay informed about current trends, issues, and needs.
- Offer financial support and consulting for Jewish ECE professionals.
- Stay abreast of current issues facing the Bay Area Jewish community to remain able to pivot in support of urgent Jewish ECE community needs (i.e., offering security grants post-October 7, offering emergency bonuses to teachers and emergency grants to families financially impacted by COVID-19, etc.).
- Meet and convene with donors to keep Jewish ECE investment in mind and build sustainable funding support.
- Connect with various organizations, including Jewish organizations and local municipalities, to foster mutually beneficial connections.
- Ensure insights generated from research, pilot programs, and discussions lead to actionable change.

F. Deepen our work in the Bay Area

- Continue increasing enrollment and capacity at existing preschools through catalytic investments.
- Continue to expand Jewish ECE's reach outside of existing centers. This may include funding new satellite preschools in Jewish ECE deserts, adding more infant and toddler care to serve families, supporting transitional kindergarten programs, expanding the pipeline via parenting centers, and supporting family/home daycare programs (including those for Russian, Spanish, and Hebrew-speaking Jewish communities).
- Sponsor local professional development opportunities that link increased education with higher pay, including learning and networking events for educators and administrators. This also includes offering new alumni events for graduates of our programs (e.g., the Early Childhood Higher Education Program).
- Partner with existing programs that serve families with young children in local Jewish organizations to promote connection and help families understand the Bay Area Jewish ECE landscape.
- Partner with Bay Area Jewish ECE preschools to determine interest in marketing their programs and the overall benefits of Jewish ECE to young families.



Priority 2: Scale our impact in new markets

EarlyJ has been hugely successful in supporting Jewish ECE across the Bay Area. As we move forward, we will scale our proven, evidence-based interventions to grow the capacity and quality of Jewish ECE programming, beginning with Los Angeles. Our existing pillars guide this work as we look for opportunities to increase our impact and intentionally scale, providing supporters with the opportunity to collaborate with us from the beginning. After learning about the needs, existing resources, and Jewish communal infrastructure that primes a community for EarlyJ support, we will thoughtfully develop models for expansion and identify potential communities that meet determined criteria. We will also open our most successful initiatives, such as the Early Childhood Higher Education Program, to communities outside the Bay Area.





To support Priority 2, we will:

A. Develop scaling models

- Codify EarlyJ's proven model, incorporating financial, structural, and staffing considerations as a reference point when exploring scaling.
- Determine the key factors EarlyJ will utilize when exploring whether we should expand into a new community, including external considerations (e.g., requisite financial support, Jewish communal landscape, or the presence of potential partner organizations) and internal considerations (e.g., staff capacity). Above all, we are committed to raising new funds within expansion communities before scaling.
- Create a menu of investment strategies that allow communities to select initiatives that meet their specific needs and available resources. This menu will prioritize offerings for which we have strong evidence of impact, leaving room for iteration based on community needs and our continued learning in the field.
- Identify potential cities to enter based on an "expansion rubric." We will use the rubric to guide our long-term approach to scaling and determine which cities to prioritize strategically.

B. Pilot select Bay Area-focused initiatives on a national scale

- Open initiatives (such as the Early Childhood Higher Education Program and Early Childhood Jewish & Israel Cultural Ambassador Program) to educators outside the Bay Area, expanding our reach. We will pilot these initiatives in 2 to 3 additional regions. We will also explore launching a national cohort, bringing together professionals from multiple cities in shared learning.

C. Test, iterate on, and learn from targeted community expansion

- As we expand to new communities, leave space to tweak existing models and pilot new frameworks to meet the needs of new locations.
- Regularly assess the effectiveness of each expansion effort, identifying key lessons learned, adapting strategies, and updating our menu of offerings as needed to continuously refine and elevate EarlyJ's scaling approach.

Priority 3: Elevate the field

We will work to help the Jewish community recognize the immense importance of Jewish ECE by boosting this conversation to the national forefront. Our focus on field elevation creates exciting opportunities for funders to support Jewish ECE in new ways. We want to realize the full potential of Jewish ECE and must do so by showcasing its importance in the lives of children, families, and the Jewish community writ large. We will develop and fund initiatives that support the Jewish ECE field as a whole, providing additional professional development and training engagements for educators to promote longevity and educator quality, developing current and future generations of Jewish ECE leaders. We will also create fieldwide recognition opportunities for individuals and organizations to celebrate successes and host fieldwide convenings to share ideas.





To support Priority 3, we will:

A. Support Jewish ECE educators

- Sponsor ongoing professional development and credentialing opportunities for educators to promote retention. We will identify sustainable opportunities to connect increased training with higher compensation.
- Experiment with broadening the pool of potential educators, such as engaging older adults and shinshinim (Israeli young adults who spend a year serving as ambassadors to Jewish communities). We also plan to explore partnerships with local colleges to support students' exploration of careers in Jewish ECE and offer financial incentives to students who study and pursue Jewish early childhood educator roles.
- Establish a mentorship program where experienced ECE professionals foster the growth and development of emerging educators.
- Establish awards to recognize outstanding educators who demonstrate leadership, excellence, and commitment to the field.
- Showcase Jewish ECE educators on the national stage and amongst broader Jewish leadership to elevate their status within the community (i.e., Z3 Leadership Lab participants).

B. Promote Jewish ECE's value proposition

- Promote thought leadership by sharing insights and spearheading discussions with funders and communities to improve the access and affordability of Jewish preschool education nationwide.
- Identify and compile existing research that showcases the impact of Jewish ECE on children, families, and Jewish communal life, promoting this research to practitioners and funders to deepen understanding of the value of Jewish ECE.
- Consider the feasibility of spearheading a national, centralized Jewish ECE organization that supports the needs of Jewish ECE programs across the country. This organization would also help raise awareness about Jewish ECE, elevating the field's reputation.

C. Promote fieldwide awareness

- Maintain and promote fieldwide advocacy efforts. We will continue to seek out opportunities to connect with municipal leadership, apply for government funding, and increase public support for ECE in both Jewish and secular spaces.
- Advocate for Jewish ECE and the importance of engaging Jewish families with funders, federations, and local community stakeholders to ensure programs receive adequate support.

D. Host fieldwide convenings and learning opportunities.

- Connect and cultivate a national community of Jewish ECE directors, educators, and funders through convenings while leveraging research on Jewish ECE and family education needs across the U.S.
- Launch a site visit program so Jewish ECE directors and educators can connect and learn from one another.
- Invite participants from our initiatives to share learnings, insights, and ideas with other individuals and the Jewish community on a national scale.
- Invest in the creation of a learning cohort that regularly convenes educators, Jewish ECE directors, and other field experts to explore cutting-edge and timely concepts relevant to the field. In addition to offering opportunities for the group to meet collectively, we will build educational tracks to help participants understand their distinct roles within the Jewish ECE ecosystem.



Priority 4: Experiment with new approaches that accelerate our impact

EarlyJ has a proven ability to identify and experiment with new, promising interventions that address the sector's most pressing challenges. We will continue to test and ideate on transformational educational and programmatic models, expanding field-wide knowledge in the process. We will also support educators, directors, and thought leaders as they develop new curricula to better serve students, brainstorm collective solutions to common challenges, and experiment with yet-undiscovered innovations. We will pilot new ways to support preschools, parents, and educators, centering the needs of these stakeholders. We will intentionally experiment in ways that accelerate our reach and impact, concentrating our efforts on cutting-edge ideas that are core to our mission of enhancing quality, accessibility, community, and affordability. Finally, we will prioritize sustainability.





To support Priority 4, we will:

A. Explore funding new models for Jewish ECE programs

- Utilize research on successful ECE and family education models to identify innovative ideas from the field.
- Consider sponsoring a lab preschool, in partnership with a Jewish or secular preschool, to train educators and experiment with new models in early childhood education. The lab preschool will invite educators from around the country to observe and learn best-in-class techniques.
- Fund the piloting of new specialty preschools, such as a language immersion center or a preschool run in partnership with a Jewish retirement community to reach new Jewish families.
- Explore the possibility of partnering with national childcare providers to offer Jewish tracks in preschools located in densely populated Jewish areas.

B. Cultivate innovative ideas in the field

- Use a “hack-a-thon” model to brainstorm novel ideas to elevate the field, explore solutions to field-wide challenges, and support schools in developing focused curricula to meet the needs of their children and families. Develop innovative strategies for engaging Jewish ECE families.
- Launch an innovation fund to support educators and administrators in testing compelling, experimental ideas.
- Launch a Jewish professional scholarship fund that allows Jewish professionals the means to enroll their children in Jewish preschools.

C. Brainstorm and test new ways to support preschools

- Explore developing a community-wide administrator role that supports all preschools within a community. Position responsibilities might include exploration of communal-wide shared benefits, best hiring practices, substitute teacher planning, and helping to facilitate renewed cooperation and collaboration between local Jewish ECE programs.
- Provide coaching to support preschools in developing new fundraising strategies to enhance their financial sustainability. Potential ideas include small group engagements, dinners, parlor meetings, and mapping the field of funders to support outreach. We will also explore providing coaching and expertise to help communities raise more money for Jewish ECE scholarships and advocating for government funding in partnership with preschools.

E. Make early childhood teaching a viable, long-term profession

- Pioneer sustainable approaches to ensure consistent pay and benefits for educators commensurate with elementary school teachers.
- Examine the possibility of investing in a program that provides affordable housing for educators.

D. Find new ways to support and engage parents and caregivers

- Pilot sponsoring additional services for children participating in Jewish ECE programs, such as offering paid childcare during Jewish holidays, hot lunches, or additional meals, and offering before or aftercare.
- Explore ways to use incentive funding to help more families choose Jewish ECE. These funds will be targeted toward specific populations interested in enrolling but hesitant to do so. If such a model proves successful, we will consider creating an endowed incentive fund.
- Support innovative ways to engage preschool families, focusing on peer-led opportunities.
- Invest in opening new parenting centers in the preschools.



Priority 5: Build our internal capacity

To accomplish our goals, we must invest in the internal capacity of EarlyJ. We will ensure that we are financially secure, operationally sound, and appropriately staffed. We will also consider our organization's potential future as an independent non-profit, carefully weighing the pros and cons of such a decision.





To support Priority 5, we will:

A. Increase staff capacity

- Hire personnel to focus on EarlyJ's work. We will prioritize the hiring of a director-level role for the Bay Area and LA, and an individual to lead an expanded Early Childhood Jewish & Israel Cultural Ambassador Program. We will also plan to hire a part-time staff member or consultant to support development work.
- Reevaluate hiring and staffing needs regularly to ensure we can continue accomplishing our goals.

B. Building internal fundraising capabilities

- Identify funders to support scaling efforts, thinking intentionally about the relationship between local and national funders.
- Consistently refine and update a fundraising plan, assessing grant opportunities and major gift strategies on an ongoing basis. We will prioritize raising additional funds to fully realize the impact of our foundational Bay Area engagement and clearly define our fundraising approach prior to entering new markets. As we grow in additional markets, we seek to find funding partners to support overarching, national work to complement local investment.
- Hone existing structures to strengthen board fundraising efforts.
- Refresh materials to support board fundraising efforts, such as updating "case for giving" language and our fundraising menu.

C. Elevate internal processes and infrastructure

- Design and codify our internal processes to ensure we are striking the right balance between investing in Bay Area interventions, scaling, and new endeavors. Additionally, we will strategically allocate time for emergency response.
- Ensure our internal systems, processes, and databases are effectively suited to support scaling.
- Launch independent evaluations of EarlyJ's work and showcase evaluation results from key programs to highlight EarlyJ's successes.

D. Develop lay-led input and support for EarlyJ's work

- Develop a lay committee structure that provides opportunities for input from various stakeholders based on EarlyJ's needs and potential growth areas.

E. Strengthen EarlyJ's brand

- Hone EarlyJ's brand identity, develop new promotional materials and update existing collateral to effectively tell our story.

F. Evaluate becoming a 501(C)(3)

- Determine the trade-offs involved in becoming an independent non-profit entity.



Investing in Our Future

At EarlyJ, we believe that the foundation of a strong Jewish community is built in the earliest years of life. This pivotal moment calls for bold action to ensure the future of the Jewish people through the transformative power of early childhood education. Our plan focuses on 4 core pillars—expanding preschool capacity, investing in educators, strengthening family engagement, and increasing access to quality early education. We are addressing these critical needs and looking at the entire ecosystem of early childhood education, targeting all aspects simultaneously to create a comprehensive and lasting impact.

This is not just a short-term effort but a long-term commitment to our collective future. As we embark on this journey, we invite our community, other foundations, and partners to join us in this important work. Together, we will strengthen and sustain a vibrant, connected Jewish future for years to come.

