

Managing New Trends in Center-Federation Relations: A Center Perspective

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OVER the decades, both the Jewish Federation and the Jewish Community Center movements have gone through many changes. Because of their respective abilities to adapt to changing needs, they have maintained their viability and continue to play very significant roles in American Jewish life.

Historically, the Federation and Center movements have embraced a similar philosophy. Both defined their missions in communal terms and made conscious efforts to involve all segments of the Jewish community in their operations. Federation assumed its role in central fundraising, allocation and planning, while the Center fulfilled its role as a functional agency in the community. Plans for action relating to needs in the community were carried out through the Center, as well as through other functional agencies.

During the past decade, a change in this traditional view of the Federation and the Center has emerged. As Federations have expanded their role as the "umbrella" organization of the Jewish community, the Center has begun to be seen less as the Federation's functional arm and more as one of a large matrix of Jewish organizations who together make up the Jewish community and fully meet Jewish needs. Increasingly, Federations are involving synagogues, temples, educational institutions and many other Jewish organizations in their deliberations, as well as their allo-

cations. Since many of these organizations provide services similar to those of the Center (e.g. pre-school, camps, single adult programs, senior citizen clubs, performing arts groups, etc.), Centers are forced to compete with them for community dollars. Jewish communal leaders predict that this trend will continue and some believe that the subsidizing of synagogues and temples by Federation will be commonplace by the 1990's. As this trend continues, the question for Center leadership increasingly becomes how to protect the community's investment in the facilities and programs of the Center and what future role will Federation play in the effort. It is not our intention here to criticize the concept of competition within the Jewish community. Indeed, some competition within the non-profit community can have the same positive effects as in the private sector, i.e. increased quality of services and more effective definition of needs. However, the trend toward community funding of other groups to provide services that historically were the purview of the Center puts the Center in the position of making an adjustment in its view of the Federation's role in providing adequate support for the Center to fulfill its goals and objectives.

The trend to operate Jewish agencies on more businesslike models is a positive one which is "shaking up" those agencies that are not fulfilling their missions,

while strengthening those that are. It is our opinion that a more businesslike approach is now mandatory for Centers to effectively manage their relationships with Federations. In effect, what is needed is a contractual arrangement to replace current, casual understandings. A clear understanding of its relationship with Federation is essential for the Center to do strategic planning in relation to its own goals and objectives. The last significant document that addressed this issue on a national level was a 1957 statement entitled "Proposed Statement of Principles in Regard to Relationships between Jewish Community Centers and Jewish Federations," published by the Jewish Welfare Board and the Council of Jewish Federations. While it is intentionally broad in its approach, examination of the statement reveals an outline of a number of sound principles that remain quite relevant today. Perhaps the two national bodies should reaffirm or update the principles stated at that time. National leadership in this effort might prove to be useful in helping local communities clarify their situations. At the very least, it would open the discussion and help get the issues on the table.

In researching the subject of Center-Federation relationship, the authors received responses to their queries from twenty-one large and metropolitan Jewish community centers. Only two had statements in writing, one being a one-way document of "do's and don'ts", while the other dealt only with Federation relationship regarding a union contract on personnel. Typical of the comments received was that "our relationship with the Federation is in such a state of flux that it would be indescribable."

Given this current state of unclear relationships, we have drafted the following statement as a point of departure:

Proposal for a Statement of Relationship between the Jewish Community Center and the Jewish Federation

The existence of independent agencies has been a great plus in organized Jewish life. They have been major centers for the mobilization of community support, involving large numbers of people and insuring a wide base of community understanding. They are an important source of leadership development and for identifying new needs as they emerge. They have made possible a system of community services of which Jewish communities can be justifiably proud. The autonomy and integrity of the Center and its leadership can only be maintained through an understanding between itself and the Federation that the Center has the basic responsibility for its own operation and its own destiny. This understanding requires that certain operational areas be clarified as follows:

- 1) The Jewish community center accepts the role of the Federation as the central fundraising, allocating and social planning entity of the Jewish community. The Center also accepts that the Federation will identify the needs of the Center in its annual campaign interpretation, in order to raise community dollars. In light of this understanding, the Center operates under the premise that the Federation will assume major responsibility for raising community funds for the Center's annual budget.
- 2) The Center recognizes the primacy of the Federation campaign, and as such, will limit its fund-raising activities to membership drives, major program events, journal ads and the like.

- Solicitation of support for programs and ads will be limited to a specific ceiling amount from any one individual (e.g., \$2,500). In the event special Center needs arise requiring fundraising outside these parameters, permission will be sought from the Federation.
- 3) In light of the above understanding on fund-raising and since the Center does not have a structure for major fundraising, it accepts the premise that the Federation will assume the major responsibility for all capital fund-raising.
 - 4) The Center accepts its responsibility to utilize fully all of its volunteer and staff resources to promote and enhance the Federation campaign. It also recognizes the need to coordinate its own programming so that it does not conflict with or detract from the effectiveness of the campaign.
 - 5) The Federation will not become involved in direct services to groups and individuals where these areas of service are seen as traditionally or normally the responsibility of the Center. The Federation will not fund such services to the community assumed by another agency or organization unless the Center is unable to provide the services and so agrees.
 - 6) The Federation accepts the concept that its use of the Center facilities and staff for its own functions and meetings is an endorsement of the Center, and likewise, its utilization of hotels, country clubs, etc., to the exclusion of using the Center is making an adverse statement to the community regarding the Center's prestige and image.
 - 7) The Center board of directors has the right of self-determination. This includes final determination on its own budget lines including the salary level it will pay all of its employees.
 - 8) Where special lay committees are formed in Federation to develop or administer community-wide personnel benefits programs (i.e.: Retirement, Medical-Hospitalization, etc.) these committees shall have equitable lay representation from each agency covered. Equitable representation shall be based on the size of the agency staffs included in the programs. Where these benefits require financial participation by employees, then they too shall have representation on an equitable basis.
 - 9) The Federation annually makes an allocation to the Center's operating budget based on an agreed upon formula or percentage. It shall not be construed as deficit financing. Should program, personnel or fiscal conditions be such that the Center sustains an operating surplus, this surplus by agreement, must be placed in a Reserve for Repair and Replacement account, where it will be utilized for major items only. This procedure is planned to encourage the Center toward ever increasing the efficiency of its management and to prepare itself for future significant expenditures not in the operating budget. Any deficits that occur must be absorbed by the Center and budgeted to be retired the following year.
 - 10) The Center assumes the overall responsibility for coordinating communal involvement in major Jewish community events, i.e.:

Jewish Book Month, Israel Independence Day, Holocaust Remembrance, etc.

- 11) Recognizing that good communication is essential in maintaining a sound relationship, both the J.C.C. and the Federation will each appoint an officer as a liaison to the other's board of directors and this person will be invited to attend all board meetings.
- 12) The Center should be appropriately involved in the Federation's social planning and budgeting process. Ideas and emerging needs are often best identified at the grass roots level and the planning process should involve Center staff and lay leaders.

In conclusion, the above twelve points are from a Center's perspective and intended as points of departure for discussion. We believe that each of these points, as well as others, should be negotiated between each Center and its local Federation and be put into a time limited contract as in any significant business relationship. The critical issue is whether or not professional and lay leadership in Centers and Federations are ready to sit down together to discuss and clarify these points in their own communities with honest recognition of the "trends in motion" that affect both organizations. If they do, then change within both movements will be manageable and productivity in relation to the common mission will be maximized.