



המרכז הישראלי
JCC Israel Center

Israel
Seminars

Guidelines for Developing a JCC Staff and Board Seminar in Israel

These guidelines, in conjunction with the seminar proposal form, are designed to expedite the process of developing a training seminar in Israel for professionals from JCCs and/or other agencies in the community.

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THE PLANNING PROCESS

An Israel training seminar should ideally fit into the big picture of the agency's overall board development plan, including Jewish education, Israel engagement and other areas. Clarification of the agency's goals, objectives and desired outcomes helps focus the Israel seminar planning process.

Planning Time

We recommend at least nine months of planning time to develop a finely-tuned program and provide participants with useful background for their Israel experience.

Preparatory Programs

Better prepared seminar participants are able to begin their Israel experience at a more advanced level; when possible, we recommend to allocating time to provide grounding in basic areas of knowledge, e.g., history (in broad strokes), geography, political system, major social blocs, and current issues in the news. Resources for preparatory programs can be found on JCCA.me. Some JCCs invite educators on staff, outside speakers or their *shlichim* (emissaries) to present some of the sessions, while others hand over the responsibility to the participants to lead sessions.

The JCC Israel Center is happy to arrange a video conference (ZOOM) with the group prior to departure to review the program, logistics, security concerns, etc.

Follow-Up Programs

A successful seminar will hopefully whet the appetite for ongoing learning, whether about Israel, Judaism, Hebrew, history, religion or the Jewish world.

We strongly recommend you consider what type of follow up you want to initiate even before you leave for the Israel seminar. It's worth thinking about how to share the experience with the staff who were not on the seminar? How to share the impact of the seminar with the board or donors who may have given a financial contribution to the seminar? How to maintain the enthusiasm and energy experienced by the participants? What tangible ways can you bring the Israel experience to the JCC—

in programing? Ambiance? In order to maximize the impact of the Israel seminar on the agency JCCs have invited their Israel tour educators or presenters to participate in a ZOOM call after the seminar or even invite them to their communities as scholars in residence. Many JCCs sponsor a series of seminars over a period of years (for a mix of returning and new participants) as part of their commitment to Jewish and Israel education within their lay and professional development plan.

Timing

Seminars can be scheduled throughout the year. Peak travel seasons can be more expensive, and some Israeli resources may not be available during holidays and the month of August. Low season rates are generally in effect from mid-November through February, excluding the Christmas–New Year period. Bear in mind the times of year that may be more or less conducive to travel for board members in particular kinds of businesses or professions.

Program Duration

Seminars average 11/12 days including travel. Ideally, they leave North America early in the week, with one Shabbat included, to maximize active program time.

Airfare

JCCs or sponsoring agencies are responsible for making all arrangements related to air travel. You may reach out to a travel agent in the community or go directly to the airline. If you are not based in a city with a direct flight to Israel, then you may get less expensive tickets flying via Europe rather than New York. The JCC Israel Center is happy to refer your JCC to a travel agency with whom we work.

Costs and Funding

Many variables affect the cost of an Israel seminar (e.g. airfare, group size, length of stay, choice of hotel, travel season). It is always worth reaching out to your local Federation who may have a budget line to support Israel travel, particularly if you will be spending time in partnership communities and other projects on the community agenda. JCCs often turn to the Board to help offset some of the

seminar costs. In many cases, JCCs will ask the staff to pay for a percentage of the trip and will enable them to deduct from their payroll over a number of months.

Participants

Staff Seminars: You need to consider whether you want to recruit a cross section of your staff, or just the department heads. You may also want to consider opening the seminar to other professionals working in the Jewish community in your neighborhood. For staff seminars, many JCCs require that a participant make a commitment to continue working at the JCC after the seminar for an agreed upon number of months/years. You will also need to consider whether you are opening the seminar to spouses or significant others.

Board Seminars: The board seminars are oriented primarily to Jewish Community Center leaders and spouses or significant others. They can fulfill a number of goals—an opportunity to provide a tailor-made learning opportunity around Israel engagement, as a backdrop and catalyst to discuss the place of Judaism and Israel in your JCC, and team-building for a new board. Experience has shown that seminars tend to facilitate meaningful experiences for first-timers, veteran visitors, repeat seminar participants, and even native-born Israelis involved in JCCs.

Group Size and Composition

Optimal group size (in terms of cost and group dynamics) is probably 15–25 participants, though seminars function well with smaller or larger groups. The cost for a small group is inevitably high per person. A seminar group may include participants from a single JCC or multiple JCCs (with the added value of networking and opportunity for shared practices). JCCs have also reached out to other Jewish agencies in their community to invite staff to join the program and this has proven to be very successful in creating greater cooperation between agencies. Some JCCs have sponsored combined Israel seminars for board members and professional staff, on the assumption that the shared experience would greatly enrich the lay-professional partnership and the conversation in the agency.

Partnership2Gether

When possible, we encourage you to incorporate a **Partnership2Gether** segment in your travel experience. This provides a wonderful opportunity to get to know a community, meet with professional counterparts and enjoy home hospitality. Depending on the nature and intensity of the relationship, a visit to your JCC's Partnership region may range from a half-day visit to two or three days of joint learning, exchanges, recreation, hospitality, and development of future joint projects under partnership auspices.

Focus

Israel training seminars are designed to highlight important contemporary Jewish issues in their Israeli context and facilitate opportunities for direct engagement with Israelis— specialists, resources, counterparts and others. Oriented to issues and people, the seminar affords insights into the inner workings of Israel, and by extension, Jewish life in North America, often creating lasting ties between participants and Israelis encountered as part of the experience.

We are happy to explore ways to develop a seminar relevant to “second timers” (those who have participated on an Israel seminar before). Such a seminar can focus on a specific theme , or have a project component where the seminar includes time for participants to work in small groups focusing on a chosen topic

Active Participation in Seminar Development

We encourage your active participation in the development of the seminar program to ensure that it is tailored to meet your goals and expectations.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SPONSORING JCC

Proposal Form

Several months in advance (ideally nine or more), the JCC should complete the Seminar in Israel proposal form. This process provides guidance and helpful information for developing a seminar.

Some Things to Consider:

- Criteria for selecting participants (and requirements or commitments from the staff or board members, if any)
- Allowing participants to extend their stay in Israel (or elsewhere) at end of seminar vs. group travel to and from Israel
- Thematic and content highlights for the Israel experience
- Preparatory study program and group preparation
- **Dates:** We recommend that you arrive early in the week and include a stay over one Shabbat. It is possible to arrange a seminar to coincide with a holiday such as Purim, Tu B'shvat, or Hanukkah. It is not advisable to have seminar during Pesach or Sukkot holidays.
- **Accommodation requests:** Examples of some of the hotels used by JCC groups (the "star" rating listed below is not an official rating of the Ministry of Tourism, but an approximation)

3/4 star: In Jerusalem: Dan Boutique, Prima Royale, Harmony, Leonardo Boutique; In Tel Aviv: City, Prima, Tal Beach, Art Plus, Metropolitan

4/5 star: In Jerusalem: Mount Zion, Dan Panorama , Arthur Hotel, Herods; In Tel Aviv: Shalom Relax, Orchid , Market House

5 star deluxe: In Jerusalem: Inbal, Leonardo Plaza, David Citadel, Mamilla, Orient, Herbert Samuel; In Tel Aviv: Carlton, Dan, Royal Beach

North: In Haifa: Dan Carmel/Panorama /Bay Club; Various kibbutz guest houses: Tiberias, Kibbutz Guest House, Lavi, Nof Ginosar, Ma'agan Eden, Ramot Guest House

South: Mashabim at Kibbutz Mashabe Sade; Desert Iris Hotel, Yeruham; Mitzpe Ramon Inn or Beresheet in Mitzpe Ramon

- Funding plan (participants, other sources)
- Arrange flights
- Staffing (group leader)
- Final phase (one/two months prior to arrival)
- Participant logistical information (passport numbers, rooming list; participants health declaration forms; pre-seminar preparation)
- Payment of seminar land costs (and airfare, where relevant) to JCC Association

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE JCC ISRAEL CENTER

The JCC Israel Center works with the JCC or sponsoring agency on all aspects of program development, including the preparatory and follow-up educational plan if requested.

Program Draft

Once the seminar proposal form has been received and basic logistic parameters have been confirmed, JCC Israel Center will prepare a program draft—as a collaborative process involving representative(s) from the JCC(s) or sponsoring agencies. Adjustments and tweaking of the draft will continue right up to the actual seminar!

Land Costs

Land costs will be calculated following clarification of dates, choice of hotels, and approximate group size, based on the working seminar draft. They will be updated and adjusted as any changes occur in the seminar draft or size of group.

Deposit

Once the date for an Israel Seminar trip has been agreed upon, and the first draft is shared, the sponsoring JCC is required to send a \$1,000 deposit payable to the JCC Association against an invoice sent by JCC Association's New York office.

Payment

JCCs will receive a payment schedule together with their land cost estimates. An invoice for payment of 75 percent of the seminar costs is due two months prior to the commencement of the seminar. The remaining amount will be billed immediately after the end of the seminar.

Staffing

Seminars are staffed by an Israeli tour guide-educator who is responsible for implementing the educational program of the seminar through guided visits to sites, facilitation of presentations and *mifgashim* (encounters with Israelis), framing of issues, and leading group discussions. Recommendations about suitable tour educators are forwarded to the JCC(s) or sponsoring agencies for confirmation.

Resource Materials

JCC Israel Center will prepare a sourcebook with background information and relevant articles for use during the seminar. JCCs will receive a digitized copy of this prior to departure to share with participants. On arrival in Israel, each participant will receive a sourcebook, a seminar backpack, map book and pocket size program (scheduling!).

In Israel

JCC Israel Center is responsible for the implementation of the seminar, hotel and restaurant bookings, speakers and sites. Our staff will meet regularly with the group and the group leaders, assist in ongoing fine-tuning of the program, and participate in group discussions, selected programs, and the final evaluation and wrap-up. We will do our best to make Israel Center facilities and services available to seminar participants during their stay and help expedite follow-up connections with Israeli colleagues and partners after the group returns to North America.

For further information, please contact:

Sara Sless Tel. 011-972-2-625-1265 #5 Email: s.sless@jcca.org

Shira Lupiansky Hasson Tel. 011-972-6251265 # 4 Email s.hasson@jcca.org

Revised: 2018

PAYMENT, INSURANCE AND CANCELLATION

JCC Seminars in Israel Payment Schedule for Land Costs

	DATE	AMOUNT	COMMENTS
Payment #1 Deposit	To be paid by the sponsoring JCC to the JCC Association at the beginning of the planning process and sent together with the request form	\$1,000	Refundable up to five months prior to arrival
Payment #2	To be paid no later than two months prior to arrival	75 percent of the total cost of the trip	Non-refundable
Payment #3	To be paid immediately upon invoicing at the end of the trip	25 percent of total payment (minus payments on account)	Non-refundable

Travel Insurance

We highly recommend that all participants purchase comprehensive travel insurance that includes "cancel for any reason" when paying for their travel arrangements.

Cancellation by Individuals

The final group price is determined based on the size of the group and the program. When there are individual cancellations, those doing so will have to pay their share of the fixed costs (e.g., bus, tour educator, educational programs). This payment will ensure that the cost for the other participants remains unaltered. Hotels are at liberty to charge full costs for cancellations received a month or less prior to arrival.

Members of the group who are Israeli, regardless of where they reside, are by law required to pay VAT at hotels, which currently stands at 17 percent (citizens of other countries are exempt), and therefore may be charged VAT by the hotel reception.

JCC Association will not charge a cancellation fee in the event the trip is canceled due to war or other extreme security situation happening a month or less prior to the trip. This applies only to a cancellation instructed by Israel's official authorities.

SUGGESTED TIMELINE/CHECKLIST FOR THE SPONSORING JCC

	TO DO	✓
NINE MONTHS BEFORE	Determine preferred dates and JCC fills out seminar request form with endorsement and payment of \$1,000 deposit.	
	JCC Israel Center sends first draft and begins discussion with JCC about the program itinerary.	
	JCC Israel Center sends estimated land cost prices (the prices will be adjusted according to change in hotels, program or group size).	
	Sponsoring JCC recruits staff participants (possibly begins payroll deduction).	
	Sponsoring JCC finalizes flight arrangements with travel agent and pays required deposit for flights.	
	Sponsoring JCC reviews travel insurance options and encourage all participants to take out insurance against cancellation and for supplementary health insurance (important to check if the travel insurance must be taken out within a certain time limit).	
FOUR MONTHS BEFORE	JCC Israel Center sends suggested preparatory materials (participant form, medical form and materials for pre-trip sessions).	
	Sponsoring JCC makes payments according to schedule sent by JCC Israel Center.	
	Sponsoring JCC runs preparatory sessions (approx. 2-5) for group and shares final program draft, clarifies expectations etc. shares with group the <i>JCC Israel Center General Information About Israel</i> booklet, SIM card/cellphone rental in Israel, and finalizes meeting point at airport etc. If more than one JCC is involved, one of the preparation sessions could include webinar between the different groups of staff.	
	Sponsoring JCC sets up format to share the staff journey with the staff and families left behind at the JCC (e.g., daily blog, photos, update in the lobby, webpage updates).	
	JCC Israel Center sends sourcebook as PDF file to share with participants prior to arrival in Israel to allow for some background reading.	
	→ Seminar group in Israel!!!!!! → Participants receive sourcebook, pocket book itinerary.	
	Participants fill out evaluations	
POST-SEMINAR	Sponsoring JCC arranges post trip session(s) for evaluation and on-going learning and discussion; to share the story with the board or with staff members and initiate program(s) or ideas for improved Jewish/Israel ambiance at the JCC.	
SIX MONTHS POST-SEMINAR	JCC Israel Center sends out evaluation form to JCC executive or group leader.	



JCC Association | המרכז הישראלי
of North America | JCC Israel Center

520 Eighth Avenue, 4th fl. | New York, NY 10018
tel: 212-532-4949 | fax: (212) 481-4174

JCC Israel Center

Solomon & Mary Litt Building
12 Moshe Hess Street | Jerusalem, 94185, ISRAEL
tel: 011-972-2-625-1265 | fax: 011-972-2-624-7767

jcca.org