

Thriving Synagogue Learning Tool Dimensions of Thriving

Thriving Synagogue Definition

Thriving synagogues are vital and alive, filled with purpose, activity and energy. Members and participants feel a commitment to and affection for the congregational community, the synagogue, and the Jewish life and learning that take place there.

SYNERGY/UJA-Federation's Thriving Synagogue Learning Tool provides participating synagogues with their profile of thriving. The profile is based on two indicators and six dimensions of thriving as described below.

Indicators of Thriving

By definition, thriving synagogues are vital *today* and show promise of a strong *future*. They readily attract, involve, and retain members and participants. They are financially sound. Thriving synagogues are dynamically heading toward their future. They have a clear sense of purpose and a vision and plan for fulfilling it. They are on the move, and members and participants are excited about the possibilities for the future of their synagogue.

Dimensions of Thriving

I. **Belonging: This is MY Place**

Members in thriving synagogues have a strong sense of *belonging*. The synagogue plays a central role in their lives, and they feel a personal responsibility to help it succeed. They are proud to be members and would recommend the synagogue to a friend. They are comfortable and at home here and feel that this place is an excellent fit for them. They consider their dues or contributions an investment in the synagogue community. They fully intend to stay here.

II. **Intentional Leadership**

In a thriving synagogue, volunteer *leadership* does not belong to a closed circle of people. Rather, there is a healthy flow of new volunteers into leadership positions. Lay leaders have a vision for the synagogue. They model Jewish values and perform their jobs well. They are accessible and responsive and have earned the trust of the congregation.

III. **Sacred Purpose**

Synagogues with a *sacred purpose* are having a measurable impact on their members. They are fulfilling people's spiritual needs and helping them grow as Jews. Prayer services are meaningful and attract people. Clergy articulate a vision of Jewish life that resonates with members and participants. The synagogue is understood and felt to be a sacred place.

IV. **Connected Community**

Members, clergy, and staff in a *connected community* are open, welcoming, and appreciative. Members are woven into the fabric of the congregation. They feel connected to people there, and these friendships and relationships extend beyond the walls of the synagogue. They are able to contribute their skills and talents to the synagogue.

V. Sound Operations

Thriving synagogues have *sound operations* with regard to management of the budget, program, communications, and facilities. Things run smoothly in these synagogues. Facilities are well kept, communications are clear and timely, and programs are of the highest quality. Management and budget not only follow good nonprofit practices but are also reflective of Jewish values.

VI. Outward Facing

Synagogues that are outward facing are concerned not only with matters within the congregation but also with their obligation to others. They collaborate with other organizations and are well regarded for their contributions to the larger community.