



NCEJ Funds Programs Worldwide – Providing a Place Where All Are Welcome

For over 45 years NCEJ has given grants for programs that educate, engage, and connect new people to Judaism – including interfaith families, people interested in conversion, Jewish-adjacent individuals, and others who want to explore becoming part of the Jewish community.

NCEJ provides grants to established Jewish organizations, including synagogues, JCCs/Federations, regional consortiums, and national networks. One of our primary priorities is marketing – we want our grantees to promote their programs using a variety of methods to widen their audience and bring in new people.

Holidays Can Be a Hook Bringing People into Judaism

NCEJ provides grants for holiday how-to workshops and hands-on programs that help interfaith/intercultural families, Jewish-adjacent individuals, and spiritual seekers learn about the meaning of Jewish holidays and holiday traditions. Our grants cover marketing, program materials, security, some staff support, and related expenses for both single events and multi-session programs, traditional classes and experiential learning.



Grantee: Hillel Minsk

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT

Finchley Progressive Synagogue, London



Finchley Progressive Synagogue

Case Study: A London synagogue's Passover program emphasized empathy towards strangers because "we were once strangers in the land of Egypt"

*"You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt."
(Exodus 23:9)*

Finchley Progressive Synagogue in London received a grant in 2025 for a series of holiday programs that aimed to empower participants to feel confident celebrating at home. Over the course of a month participants learned about the story and traditions of Passover. Students in the congregation's Conversion/Delving into Judaism class cooked and served the Seder meal, as a way of "leaning in" to the rituals. Interfaith families and Jewish-adjacent and interested individuals were encouraged to attend, and were invited to play a part in the evening events.

"We are proud that our community is inclusive in every sense and we take pride in the diversity of our membership and our efforts to welcome people whose journeys to Judaism may be unique, challenging, winding, or choppy. Whatever their path has been to reach us we are proud to welcome them." – Finchley Progressive Synagogue



Primary Purpose of the Program

The program aimed to educate and engage individuals who do not identify as Jewish in the preparation, meaning and traditions of key Jewish observances: the Jewish Festival Year and Shabbat. Through interactive cooking sessions, communal meals, and educational discussions, participants gained insights into Jewish traditions and their significance in fostering community and shared values.



Finchley Progressive Synagogue

The program offered accessible, engaging and educational events designed to introduce non-Jewish individuals and families who are curious about Judaism or connected to Jewish life through relationships, friendships, or other experiences to Jewish practices. Each event incorporated an educational component and provided opportunities for participants to experience Jewish customs firsthand.

Impact: These programs are designed to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of Jewish traditions among those who do not identify as Jewish. By providing meaningful, hands-on experiences, FPS aims to break down barriers, build bridges, and create a sense of shared community.

What Worked Well

Increased understanding: Participants gained a richer appreciation of Jewish customs, history, and values, dispelling misconceptions and fostering cultural awareness.

Engagement beyond the events: Many attendees have expressed a desire to continue learning, with some attending additional synagogue events, enrolling in educational courses, or forming friendships within the Jewish community.

Stronger interfaith relationships: The communal nature of the sessions promoted dialogue and mutual respect, creating opportunities for meaningful connections between Jewish and non-Jewish participants.

Personal and Family Impact: Participants, particularly those in interfaith families, have shared that the program has helped them incorporate Jewish traditions into their homes in an accessible and meaningful way.

Evidence of Success

FPS has seen a tangible increase in engagement, with over 40% of attendees at past events returning for additional programs or engaging with the synagogue in other ways. Events consistently attracted 50-75 attendees, with some flagship events (such as the Communal Seder) reaching 100+ participants.

Follow-up:

Beyond individual sessions, this program is part of FPS's wider mission to ensure that those curious about Judaism have a place to learn, experience, and feel welcomed. By providing an open and inclusive space, FPS hopes to inspire long-term connections and a lasting sense of belonging for those seeking to explore Jewish traditions.



Tips and Advice

To ensure continued engagement:

- FPS will invite participants to additional synagogue events such as community gatherings, social action projects and cultural celebrations.
- FPS will provide online and printed resources to allow attendees to continue their exploration of Jewish traditions at home.
- FPS will establish a follow-up system, including email newsletters and personal invitations, to maintain relationships and track long-term impact.

How FPS describes their program to participants on their homepage message:

*We make welcome those who are single, in couples, in families, interfaith, with children or without, those who come for the first time to learn or those who are moving from other Jewish homes.
However you are approaching Judaism, you are welcome.*

Apply now for holiday programming that connects new people to Judaism

NCEJ accepts applications throughout the year — apply anytime! Grantees may receive more than one grant per year. Apply now and hear back within 30 days. For more details see our website: ncejudaism.org

Have an idea for a program but not sure it meets our guidelines? Questions? Please contact Ellen Gerecht, Executive Director, at ellen@ncejudaism.org or call **301-802-4254**.

Check Out Our Resource Pages

Our program profile pages are chock-full of examples of recently-funded projects, ranging from Judaism 101 classes to holiday workshops for interfaith families. Scroll through for program ideas, marketing suggestions, and advice on what worked well. To get ideas that you can use in your community see our profile pages on our website: ncejudaism.org



Finchley Progressive Synagogue

Introduction to Jewish Traditions

*Fostering a Welcoming & Educational
Pathway to Judaism*

Holiday Programming

*Celebrating and Connecting
Newcomers to Jewish Life*

Interfaith/Intercultural Engagement

*Connecting Interfaith
Families to Judaism*