



UNITED SYNAGOGUE OF CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM
SEABOARD REGION

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THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE OF CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM
SEABOARD REGION

**PLANNING
FOR OUR
FUTURE**

**A Strategic Plan
for the
Seaboard Region**

February 2006



Long Range Planning Committee

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The leadership of the Seaboard Region of the USCJ created a long-range planning process in mid 2004. Their goal is to continue to identify and meet the ongoing and emerging needs of the Region's constituent congregations, within the limits of available personnel and financial resources.

The membership of the Seaboard Region's Long-Range Planning Committee included *Chair*, Dr. Arthur N. Popper (Congregation Beth El of Montgomery County); William O. Bresnick (Congregation Har Shalom); Dr. Joel M. Cohen (Tifereth Israel Congregation); Andrea Glazer (Congregation Beth Emeth); *President, Seaboard Region USCJ*, Jerold L. Jacobs (Congregation Etz Hayim); Naomi Yadin-Mendick (B'nai Shalom of Olney); Rabbi Michael Safra (B'nai Israel Congregation); *Executive Director, Seaboard Region USCJ*, Mark Waldman; and Martin Zelman (Congregation Beth Emeth).

The Committee developed a Strategic Plan, including a Vision, Mission Statement, and Goals and Objectives. Furthermore, the Committee suggested a number of Action Items related to the Goals and Objectives with the expectation that these would serve as examples that would be supplemented by USCJ staff and member groups as the implementation process was put into effect. This plan was unanimously approved by Seaboard Region's Executive Committee for implementation, beginning March 2006.

The Committee points out that the Plan presented here is a living document that should be frequently tested and adjusted to enhance and renew the mission of the organization.

THE STRATEGIC PLAN

VISION

The Seaboard Region of The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism seeks to enhance the quality of Jewish life, inspire the identification of individuals as Conservative Jews, and promote the central role of synagogues in Jewish community life.

MISSION STATEMENT

As a region of The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, the mission of the Seaboard Region is to create a partnership with constituent congregations in the District of Columbia, Maryland, North Carolina, and Virginia:

- To inspire Jewish living, learning, synagogue involvement, and a commitment to Conservative Jewish values,
- To promote the synagogue as a means to perpetuate Jewish life,
- To enhance the synagogue's capacity to promote Conservative Judaism,
- To create a regional community of Conservative Jewry, *and*
- To speak as a voice of the Conservative Movement within our Jewish communities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To fulfill its mission, Seaboard Region USCJ:

- Provides program and personnel resources to the synagogues,
- Provides guidance and training to professionals and to lay leaders,
- Provides regional programs independently and with synagogues and other Jewish organizations, *and*
- Works with other arms of the Conservative Movement in the United States and in Israel.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL 1: *Define Conservative Jewish living, learning, and values and promote the observance of mitzvot within that framework.*

- Objective 1:** Create public relations materials defining Conservative Judaism.
- Objective 2:** Encourage unaffiliated Jews to join Conservative synagogues.
- Objective 3:** Coordinate and promote courses on Conservative Judaism (e.g., adult education).
- Objective 4:** Facilitate traditional learning opportunities in nontraditional places.
- Objective 5:** Reach out to people who want to identify with a synagogue but do not know with which synagogue to affiliate.
- Objective 6:** Create opportunities to incorporate the Conservative Movement's ideals into educational curricula of the synagogues.
- Objective 7:** Enhance work on college campuses.

GOAL 2: *Help synagogues enhance Conservative Jewish living.*

- Objective 1:** Promote Conservative Jewish scholarship.
- Objective 2:** Develop ways for synagogues to share programming for various demographic groups within the synagogue.
- Objective 3:** Develop ways to enhance and encourage Jewish observance.
- Objective 4:** Encourage synagogues to implement programming with Jewish and educational content in line with the mission of USCJ and the Conservative Movement.
- Objective 5:** Promote synagogue literacy.
- Objective 6:** Promote region-wide programs to educate synagogue leaders.

GOAL 3: *Provide lay and professional support for synagogue leaders and staff as well as for synagogue programs.*

- Objective 1:** Determine and provide quality service to congregations and identify ways to measure success.
- Objective 2:** Increase communication among professional and lay leaders in order to provide support.

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Objective 3: Create teacher training workshops.

Objective 4: Assist synagogues in finding youth staff.

Objective 5: Provide specialized training and mentoring to new youth directors.

Objective 6: Create and produce a monthly advisor's newsletter sent to all synagogues' youth staff with programming, membership outreach, and leadership training ideas.

Objective 7: Conduct regional youth directors meetings with an emphasis on professional development, peer-to-peer networking, and sharing of ideas.

GOAL 4: *Facilitate cooperation among affiliated congregations.*

Objective 1: Encourage an atmosphere of cooperation among congregations and develop programming to facilitate such cooperation.

Objective 2: Expand regional programming and create other opportunities that allow synagogue leaders to interact, learn, and share materials.

Objective 3: Strengthen HAZAK chapters and encourage interchapter events.

GOAL 5: *Communicate effectively with synagogues and promote USCJ as a valuable resource.*

Objective 1: Develop ways to communicate about USCJ to the members of affiliated congregations.

Objective 2: Create a more effective communication structure between USCJ-SR and its lay and professional constituents.

Objective 3: Enhance the synagogue liaison program.

Objective 4: Initiate a marketing campaign to synagogue clergy, professional staff, and lay leadership educating them about the resources available to them from USCJ.

Objective 5: Enhance electronic communications.

GOAL 6: *Encourage cooperative work with the other arms of the Conservative Movement and encourage collaboration with other Jewish organizations to achieve common goals.*

Objective 1: Promote the value of the Conservative Movement to Jewish community organizations and encourage them to involve us in their decision-making processes.

Objective 2: Strengthen cooperation among professional arms of the Conservative Movement; among lay arms of the Conservative Movement; and between lay and professional arms.

GOAL 7: *Provide data about affiliated synagogues and their membership in order to enhance the ability of the synagogues to serve their congregations.*

Objective 1: Conduct surveys and collect data to share important trends, and practices.

Objective 2: Assess the success of this planning document using appropriate surveys.

BACKGROUND AND APPROACH

THE PURPOSE OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

The Seaboard Region of The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism (USCJ-SR) has, for many years, provided support and resources to the regional Conservative Movement. However, the leadership of USCJ-SR has recently come to believe that the Region could do more to further enhance the movement. Although a wide range of suggestions have been offered as to how it may better serve its constituents, a more structured approach was undertaken to ensure that USCJ-SR maximized its services while working within the resources available. In effect, USCJ-SR had the wherewithal to enhance its contributions, but this had to be done in a finely crafted fashion that maximized impact within the limits of personnel and funds.

In order to achieve this overall goal, USCJ-SR decided to take a broad look at itself and determine its future mission and goals via a long-range planning process. USCJ-SR's leadership initiated a process in mid-2004 with a goal of having recommendations by the end of 2005 to the USCJ-SR Board and constituent congregations. Accordingly, a Long-Range Planning (LRP) Committee was convened. The Committee included members from a number of area synagogues in order to ensure that the results were representative of the breadth of interests within the Region.

THE COMPONENTS OF A STRATEGIC PLAN

It is helpful to have an understanding of the nature of a Strategic Plan in order to appreciate its value and importance to an institution. Thus, we start this section with a brief discussion of the process that led to our Strategic Plan. The outcome of a long-range planning project is a *Strategic Plan* that provides a *Vision* for the role of the group, a *Mission Statement*, and *Goals and Objectives*. The Vision Statement simply states where we see USCJ-SR in the future.

The Mission Statement is more specific and clearly defines the institution's purpose for existence. The Mission Statement helps the organization and its leadership focus on preserving or strengthening the institution's role in the community. The most successful mission statements outline missions in ways that are measurable, definable, and actionable with projects that appeal to constituents.¹

Finally, Goals and Objectives provide specific items that the organization wants to accomplish over the next several years. Within the Goals and Objectives are specific *Action Items* that, once accomplished, help the organization to achieve its Goals and Objectives, thereby fulfilling its Mission.

It is important to keep in mind that the components of the Strategic Plan are not static. They must be reviewed and evaluated on a very regular basis. It is reasonable to expect that the specific Goals and Objectives identified in this document to achieve the Vision and Mission Statements will evolve as Goals and Objectives are achieved. Although the Vision and Mission Statements may stay static for an extended period of time (e.g., five years), the Goals and Objectives and the Action Items should change on an annual basis. This plan was unanimously approved by Seaboard Region's Executive Committee for implementation beginning March 2006.

¹ Paraphrased from http://www.toolkit.cch.com/text/P03_4001.asp

THE STRATEGIC PLAN

Vision

The Seaboard Region of The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism seeks to enhance the quality of Jewish life, inspire the identification of individuals as Conservative Jews, and promote the central role of synagogues in Jewish community life.

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- Provides program and personnel resources to the synagogues,
- Provides guidance and training to professionals and to lay leaders,
- Provides regional programs both independently and with synagogues and other Jewish organizations, *and*
- Works with other arms of the Conservative Movement in the United States and in Israel.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

When preparing Goals and Objectives, the Committee, with valuable input from USCJ staff, developed a number of specific Action Items to help best achieve specific objectives. These Action Items are included as footnotes to specific objectives. It is **NOT** the intent of the Committee that these be all of the Action Items to achieve the Goals and Objectives, or that these Action Items be seen as being in any priority order. Instead, it is our belief that once this Strategic Plan is approved, additional Action Items will be developed by the Regional staff in consultation with synagogue and lay leadership.

GOAL 1: Define Conservative Jewish living, learning, and values and promote the observance of mitzvot within that framework.

- Objective 1:** Create public relations materials defining Conservative Judaism.
- Objective 2:** Encourage unaffiliated Jews to join Conservative synagogues.²
- Objective 3:** Coordinate and promote courses on Conservative Judaism (e.g., adult education).

² **Action a:** Reach out to young singles and couples with the help of such community agencies as Geshar City and GAP.

Action b: Formulate High Holiday advertisements of USCJ to focus on increasing membership in Conservative synagogues.

Objective 4: Facilitate traditional learning opportunities in nontraditional places.³

Objective 5: Reach out to people who want to identify with a synagogue but do not know with which synagogue to affiliate.

Objective 6: Create opportunities to incorporate the Conservative Movement's ideals into educational curricula of the synagogues.⁴

Objective 7: Enhance work on college campuses.

GOAL 2: *Help synagogues enhance Conservative Jewish living.*

Objective 1: Promote Conservative Jewish scholarship.⁵

Objective 2: Develop ways for synagogues to share programming for various demographic groups within the synagogue.⁶

Objective 3: Develop ways to enhance and encourage Jewish observance.

Objective 4: Encourage synagogues to implement programming with Jewish and educational content in line with the mission of USCJ and the Conservative Movement.

Objective 5: Promote synagogue literacy.

Objective 6: Promote region-wide programs to educate synagogue leaders.

GOAL 3: *Provide lay and professional support for synagogue leaders and staff as well as for synagogue programs.*

Objective 1: Determine and provide quality service to congregations and identify ways to measure success.

Objective 2: Increase communication among professional and lay leaders in order to provide support.⁷

Objective 3: Create teacher training workshops.

³ **Action a:** Lunch and Learn and other similar programs in the community to help attract people to Conservative synagogues.

Action b: Create HAZAK overnight trip to explore areas of Jewish interest.

Action c: Create a HAZAK trip to explore Jewish roots in America (i.e., Charleston).

Action d: Adult Shabbaton

⁴ **Action a:** Initiate a "Take Home" campaign in which USYers and Kadimaniks are encouraged to take home and continue Shabbat, Kashrut, and Tefillah goals learned from and experienced at Regional conventions.

Action b: Increase HAZAK content and programming at USCJ conventions, thereby increasing HAZAK attendance and participation at USCJ conventions.

Action c: Plan annual retreat that will allow time for study and prayer.

Action d: Community-wide campaign on issues such as Shabbat and kashrut.

Action e: Implement a Scholar in Residence program at USY conventions.

Action f: Invite a Rabbi to attend and participate in every convention.

⁵ **Action:** Promote Region-wide multi-synagogue scholar-in-residence programs with sub-community scholar programs.

⁶ **Action a:** Maintain a modern and updated program bank with Jewish living, Shabbat, and Jewish holiday programming ideas.

Action b: Maintain a user-friendly, modern, and updated USY program bank with Jewish, educational, social, community service, membership outreach, leadership, and Israel programming ideas.

Objective 4: Assist synagogues in finding youth staff.⁸

Objective 5: Provide specialized training and mentoring to new youth directors.⁹

Objective 6: Create and produce a monthly advisor's newsletter sent to all synagogues' youth staff with programming, membership outreach, and leadership training ideas.

Objective 7: Conduct regional youth directors meetings with an emphasis on professional development, peer-to-peer networking, and sharing of ideas.

GOAL 4: *Facilitate cooperation among affiliated congregations.*

Objective 1: Encourage an atmosphere of cooperation among congregations and develop programming to facilitate such cooperation.

Objective 2: Expand regional programming and create other opportunities that allow synagogue leaders to interact, learn, and share materials.¹⁰

Objective 3: Strengthen HAZAK chapters and encourage interchapter events.

GOAL 5: *Communicate effectively with synagogues and promote USCJ as a valuable resource.*

Objective 1: Develop ways to communicate about USCJ to the members of affiliated congregations.

Objective 2: Create a more effective communication structure between USCJ-SR and its' lay and professional constituents.¹¹

Objective 3: Enhance the synagogue liaison program.¹²

⁷ **Action a:** Use newsletter articles and email to share programming and recruitment strategies.

Action b: Increase the number of one-on-one meetings with religious school principals by having each school visited at least every 18 months.

Action c: Develop and implement a calendar of periodic conference calls for principals of remote schools.

⁸ **Action:** Actively recruit staff from local colleges, taking advantage of opportunities to partner with KOACH wherever possible.

⁹ **Action:** Have individual and group meetings and initiate a "team training model" with leadership and professional development training for youth directors and USY chapter presidents.

¹⁰ **Action a:** Create Regional synagogue officer listserv.

Action b: Ask that the Regional youth department be on all mailing and email lists and forward innovative and helpful membership and programming materials to all chapters as samples.

Action c: Coordinate a regional workshop that will enable all the principals to meet at least once every 18 months.

Action d: Continue quarterly education workshops, which include networking and professional development opportunities.

¹¹ **Action:** Create and provide an annual Seaboard USCJ report to synagogues.

¹² **Action a:** Refine the USCJ-SR executive committee liaison program.

Action b: Ask each synagogue to appoint a liaison to USCJ-SR.

Objective 4: Initiate a marketing campaign to synagogue clergy, professional staff, and lay leadership educating them about the resources available to them from USCJ.¹³

Objective 5: Enhance electronic communications.

GOAL 6: *Encourage cooperative work with the other arms of the Conservative Movement and encourage collaboration with other Jewish organizations to achieve common goals.*

Objective 1: Promote the value of the Conservative Movement to Jewish community organizations and encourage them to involve us in their decision-making processes.

Objective 2: Strengthen cooperation among professional arms of the Conservative Movement; among lay arms of the Conservative Movement; and between lay and professional arms.¹⁴

GOAL 7: *Provide data about affiliated synagogues and their membership in order to enhance the ability of the synagogues to serve their congregations.*

Objective 1: Conduct surveys and collect data to share important trends and practices.

Objective 2: Assess the success of this planning document using appropriate surveys.

13 Action a: Strengthen the HAZAK connection with USCJ by including articles about HAZAK in all USCJ publications.

Action b: Ensure that all printed material carry the USCJ and HAZAK logos.

Action c: Provide educational information to schools highlighting USCJ materials.

Action d: Promote "Framework for Excellence" as a model and goal for religious schools.

Action e: Encourage new education directors to attend New Directors Institute.

Action f: Encourage seasoned education directors to attend *Not So New Directors Institute*.

14 Action a: Provide tools and education.

Action b: Bank Program ideas around holiday times.

Action c: Help lay out behavioral ideals—as dugma.

Action d: Enhance USY, KOACH, and HAZAK to impact more individuals.

Action e: Support the Fuchsberg Jerusalem Center as a Conservative Jewish presence in Israel.

Action f: Support the World Zionist Congress elections.

Action g: Work with Jewish Federation to develop community leadership relationships.

Action h: Work with Koach and Project Reconnect to implement programming for area USY alumni to continue their relationship with the Conservative Movement post-high school.

Action i: Strengthen the relationship between USY & Kadima and the Rabbinical Assembly to increase the number of local Conservative Rabbis at Conventions thereby increasing the level of interaction between USY & Kadima members and Conservative Rabbis (and to demonstrate to Rabbis the significant impact that USY & Kadima makes on the lives of Conservative Jewish youth).

Action j: Strengthen the relationship between USY & Kadima and the Jewish Educators Assembly by providing the regional USY & Kadima calendar to all principals and by encouraging principals to enhance their support of USY and Kadima programming.

Action k: Strengthen the relationship between USY & Kadima and Camp Ramah to provide year-round informal Jewish experiences for Conservative Jewish youth.

Action l: Strengthen the relationship between USY & Kadima and Jewish Day Schools within Seaboard Region in an effort to involve more Conservative Jewish youth in USY & Kadima.

Action m: Pilot program with other arms on senior issues such as retirement concerns, ethical wills, and dealing with aging parents.

Action n: Encourage participation in JEA so that principals can grow and learn together.

Action o: Create opportunities for educators and clergy to learn together.

Follow-Up

Every strategic plan should be a living document that is constantly tested and adjusted—when objectives or goals are achieved, new ones should be developed in their place. And this Strategic Plan should be given a finite life (e.g., five years), after which time it is totally revisited and a new plan developed that builds upon the current plan.

Assessment

One of the critical factors in the planning process is determining whether the Strategic Plan is being used and how effective it is in moving us forward. As a consequence, it is imperative to have some measure of assessment of the Plan and how well it has served USCJ-SR. The LRP Committee recommends that the USCJ-SR Executive Committee develop a comprehensive assessment program for this Strategic Plan.

The minimal level of assessment should be to develop a survey of selected constituents regarding the success of USCJ-SR in serving its member organizations at this point and then at selected future intervals (e.g., end of year 1, 3, 5 after initiation of the plan) to test how well USCJ-SR is achieving its goals and objectives. In effect, Goal 7 should not only glean data about the Conservative Movement in the Seaboard Region, but it should also be used to assess the success of the Strategic Plan and help shape the use of the Plan and its Goals and Objectives.