



JCPA Launches a Path Forward for the Community Relations Network to Meet Today's New Challenges at JCPA2019 National Conference

As the Jewish Council For Public Affairs (JCPA) celebrates its 75th anniversary at JCPA2019, the organization's annual conference, it rolled out a strategic path for the future of the community relations field. These recommendations are based on a series of studies and analyses that together provide a roadmap for the organized Jewish community to meet today's current and emerging challenges such as the growing polarized political climate, anti-Semitism and anti-Israel sentiment.

During 2018, both JFNA and the Reut Group engaged in separate initiatives on community relations that resulted in similar recommendations. JFNA/JCPA Blue Ribbon Task Force was a year long assessment of the relevance of community relations with an eye to the future, and the Reut Conceptual Framework was a result of their study on the impact of the delegitimization of Israel. Their study stated that the community relations network is the Jewish American success story and if it didn't exist they would recommend to create it. As a result of the study the Reut Group delved in to the community relations field further and developed the strategic framework to envision how the field should be to meet today's challenges.

At the time the reports took place, there was a revival of the community relations system. There are currently JCRCs being formed in places like Phoenix, Seattle, Connecticut and Pennsylvania. The appointment of more than 80 new JCRC directors and 55 Federation CEOs in the last four years show more commitment to intergroup relations and that there is movement in the field. Pittsburgh is a good example of the importance of our relationships and engagement with the non-Jewish community.

Additionally, the Blue Ribbon Data survey showed that

- nearly 1/3 of Federation CEOs reporting JCRC is a high priority and another 42% a medium priority
- 51% of CEOs see JCRC priority increasing over the next 5-10 years.
- 31% of Fed. CEOs see JCRC budgets increasing, 0% decreasing.
- Federation leaders value JCRC work and JCRCs value Federation work.

In order to meet today's challenges we need to strengthen the hub of the network to meet today's current challenges and ensure that the JCRCs around the country have the resources they need to be effective.

BACKGROUND:

The community relations field came into being in 1944 when anti-Semitism was rampant and the dark days of the Holocaust threatened the very existence of the Jewish people. The national Jewish hub JCPA was born to secure America Jews future by actively engaging in American Jewish life and enlisting the Jewish community to create a just and pluralistic America working in common cause with other faith, minority and civic communities. It has achieved much in the past 75 years advancing civil rights, pluralism, and opposition to anti-Semitism.

In the past year, two separate studies were undertaken resulting in an unmistakable conclusion: it's critical that the Jewish community double down on civic engagement with other ethnic and religious communities. They contend that the community relations engagement-based approaches and methodologies have resulted in the American Jewish success story and can continue to shape the role of American Jews in an increasingly diverse society. This approach remains as crucial now as it was seven decades ago for the security and well-being of Jewish communities in the U.S. and beyond.

- [JFNA/JCPA Blue Ribbon Task Force on Jewish Community Relations \(BRTF\).](#) The year-long assessment showed a revival of the community relations field and calls for a renewed investment in the Jewish community relations field.
- *Reut Group, published of a conceptual framework: ["The New Frontiers of Community Relations"](#) and ["Strategic Framework for the Jewish Community Network Field."](#)*

The two reports underscore that the community relations field is the most effective platform for combating today's challenges and must significantly expand its resources and capacity to do so.

The reports state that it is urgent that the organized Jewish community strengthen the community relations network at the national and local levels so that it is maximally leveraged with key power centers and demographic segments in American society, both in local communities across the country and at the national level.

Stepping up intergroup engagement requires that community relations organizations clearly identify their highest public affairs priorities and dedicate themselves to building relationships with the people and organizations that will have the greatest impact on those priorities. Segments that require special attention include African Americans, Asian Americans, Latino Americans, LGBTQ leaders, mainline Protestants, young Evangelicals, Muslims, women activists and public officials at the national, state and local levels. To successfully build alliances for our most important causes, we must join with other groups on their priority concerns, even when they may not be high on our community agenda.

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The Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA) is the hub of the Jewish community relations movement, representing over 125 local Jewish community relations councils (JCRCs) and 17 national Jewish agencies. Together our network builds consensus on behalf of the entire Jewish community to promote a just and pluralistic American society, advocate for human rights around the world, and support Israel's quest for peace and security.