

Ideas Worth Investing In:

The scope of Joshua Venture Group's applicant pool

After a four-year hiatus, Joshua Venture Group (JVGroup) has emerged to rejoin the now burgeoning field of Jewish social entrepreneurship as a leading national support source for cultivating strong leaders and transformative ventures that seek to profoundly impact the American Jewish community. The organization officially re-launched in Fall 2009, announcing its call for applications for the 2010-2012 Dual Investment Program—a two-year intensive program for emerging entrepreneurs to work both individually as venture leaders and collectively as a cohort to develop and refine the professional and organizational skills needed to either start up or scale their ventures. The response to this opportunity was strong, with over 300 individuals inquiring via email and phone, by directly accessing the online application, or by attending one of the twelve JVGroup Information Sessions held in cities across the country in Fall 2009.

Of the 131 social entrepreneurs who applied for the 2010-2012 Dual Investment Program, 18 finalists now remain to compete for 8 coveted spots in the new cohort of Fellows. These finalists represent the vast diversity of the Jewish community, spanning a broad age range of 20-41, located in cities as large as NYC and as small as Austin, and addressing a wide array of issues.

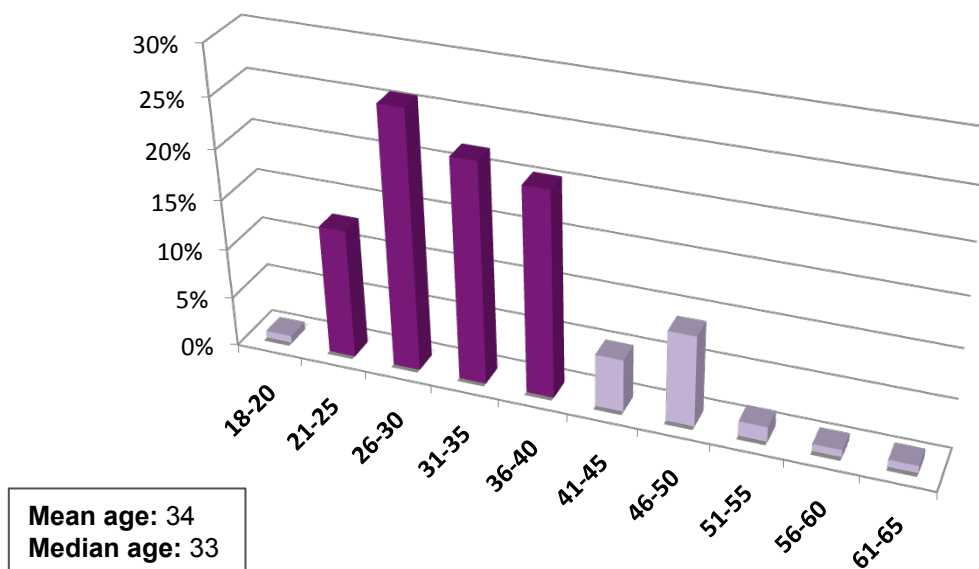
As the initial applicant pool has now been narrowed down to 18 finalists, JVGroup has aggregated extensive demographic and outreach data in order to learn more about where these ideas are coming from, who these emerging entrepreneurs are, and the kinds of ventures they are seeking to establish. As a learning organization, we are also using this data to evaluate the strategies deployed to advertise the Dual Investment Program and to ensure that we continue to open the opportunity to the broadest pool of candidates. The conclusions we have drawn from data analysis are not scientific; however, we believe that they do provide valuable insight into entrepreneurial trends in the Jewish community, as well as the impact of those who invest in emerging ventures. Through this process we have determined the following:

1. *Entrepreneurial ideas are not just a product of NextGen.*

JVGroup values ideas with potential to have a profound impact on the Jewish community and understands that the sources of these ideas are not bounded by age, gender, or geography. With this in mind, the 2010-2012 Dual Investment Program was open to social entrepreneurs of all ages, eliminating a previously existing age range eligibility of 21-35 years.

Entrepreneurs over the age of 40 welcomed this change, comprising 18% of the initial applicant pool (Figure 1). Of these applicants, 65% presented compelling cases for their ideas that advanced them to Stage 2 of the application process. JVGroup has given these more experienced professionals – but perhaps still emerging entrepreneurs – an avenue through which they can realize their visions for transforming the Jewish landscape.

Figure 1: Applicant Age, Initial Applicant Pool

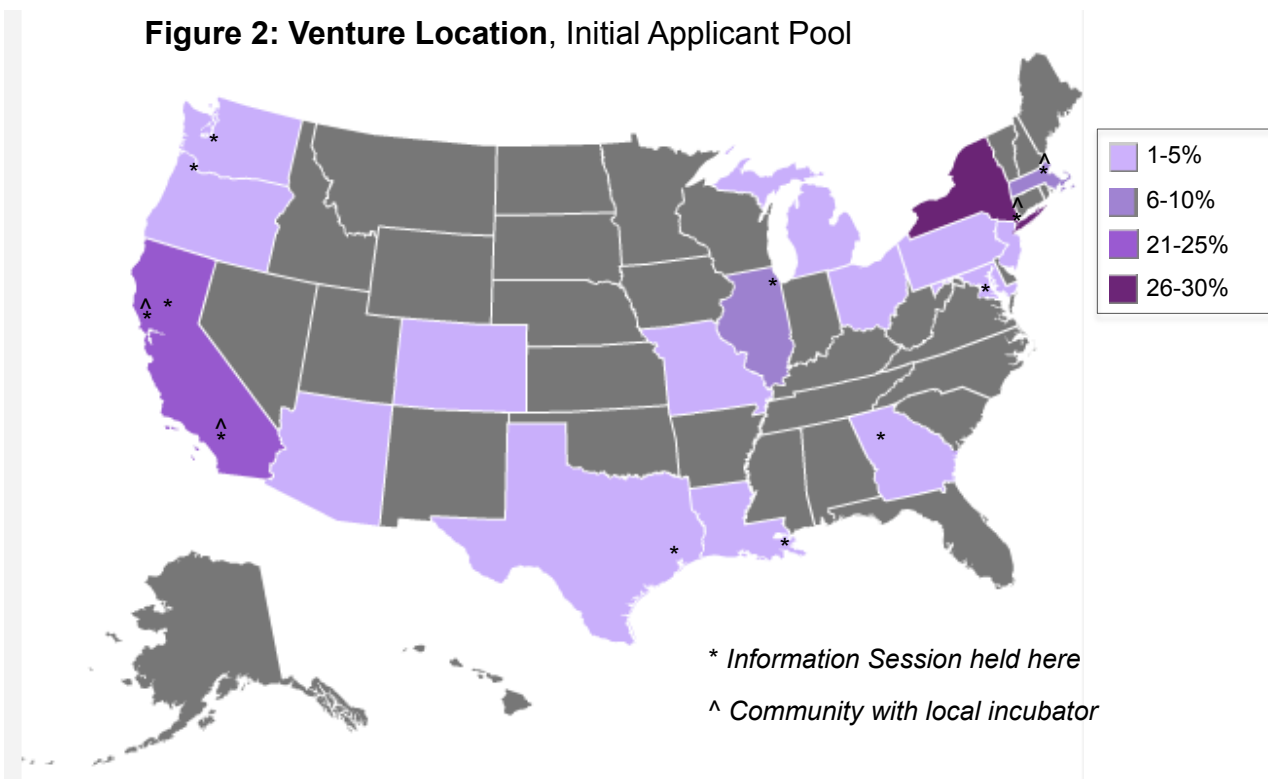


2. *Communities with a local support system for Jewish social ventures fostered a majority of JVGroup candidates.*

Specialized support for Jewish social entrepreneurial ventures can currently be found through local incubator and international support programs in key centers of Jewish life, including Bikkurim in New York, Jumpstart in Los Angeles, Upstart in the Bay Area, ROI internationally, and PresenTense in

Boston and Jerusalem. The presence of these local incubating programs encourages a culture of entrepreneurial activity within the Jewish community, as nearly 60% of JVGroup’s initial applicant pool came from these cities (Figure 2). Among applicants from these communities were several alumni or current participants in these and other programs focused on supporting startups in the Jewish community. Of the 18 finalists for the 2010-2012 Dual Investment Program, at least 6 have gone through some form of professional and/or organizational development training with PresenTense, Bikkurim, ROI or Upstart. After honing their skills and developing their ventures locally, these entrepreneurs are now in a place for, and are seeking, JVGroup’s support to take them to the next level.

Figure 2: Venture Location, Initial Applicant Pool



3. Social entrepreneurs are seeking to leverage diverse organizational models to support their mission, vision, and values.

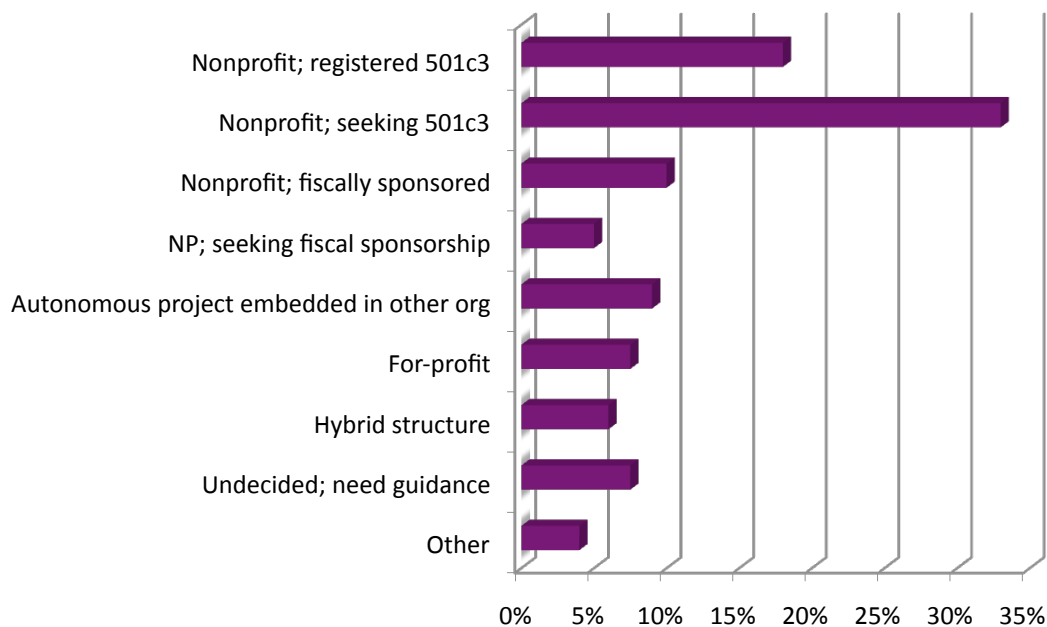
While tradition dictates that operating as a registered nonprofit is the only way to run a social mission venture, JVGroup recognizes the need to diversify the ways in which emerging ventures utilize the limited resources available and maximize their ability to sustain themselves. As such, the

criteria for the 2010-2012 Dual Investment Program was expanded so that all organizational vehicles were eligible to apply for the first time.

The response was strong, with over 18% of ventures that advanced to Stage 2 either operating or intending to operate using an alternative organizational structure, including but not limited to for-profit and hybrid models (Figure 3). The for-profit social ventures, in addition to being well thought out, were perceived to have strong funding potential, and therefore advanced at a higher rate to the final stage (Stage 3) of the application process. Of the for-profit ventures that advanced to Stage 2, 40% advanced to Stage 3, whereas the general odds of advancing to Stage 3 were 24%. Ventures like these benefit from having a dual bottom line, and their commitment both to financial stability and to social impact make theirs an attractive funding model for the community to consider. Another 8% of applicants expressed uncertainty as to how they should structure their ventures, seeking guidance on which models would be the best fit for their ventures.

This indicates that entrepreneurs are looking beyond structuring as a 501(c)(3), seeking alternative models to achieve financial stability. JVGroup is open to investing in and supports ventures with structural models that provide greater financial stability yet still seek the same communal impact we all aspire to achieve, and entrepreneurs who are exploring these alternatives are responding.

Figure 3: Venture Structure, Stage 2 Applicants



4. *Candidates were drawn to issues of food and environmental sustainability, whereas few ventures sought to relate to Israel or to the complex issues of diversity within the Jewish community.*

As applicants have demonstrated in the past – and as Jumpstart has shown more recently – the issue areas that resonate with entrepreneurs are wide-ranging. Among the emerging trends are food-related and environmental ventures, and those that seek to redefine their sense of community—by building vehicles supporting intentional, spiritual, or virtual communities.

Given the rise in popularity of the likes of Michael Pollan and Food, Inc., it is not surprising that food and environment are among the current hot topics with which many Americans are engaging – and Jews are no exception. Among the proposals for new and concept-stage ventures submitted for the Dual Investment Program included those for new educational tools, frameworks, and networking structures in order to expose the Jewish community to and better organize the growing Jewish food and environmental movements. Excluding applicants who identified both categories as issue areas addressed through their ventures, food and environmental projects working within a Jewish context comprised 18% of all applications received (Figure 4).

Likewise, in a strained economic time when spiritual and communal services within the institutional arena are unable to offer areas for growth, many of our applicants are seeking to create new models and opportunities outside these existing structures. Whether through intentional or spiritual community models, these entrepreneurs are reimagining the framework for what Jewish community can mean and look like.

In addition to being timely, these educational tools, CSAs, and spiritual and intentional communities all have potential revenue streams built into their models that lend them to be seen as more sustainable investments.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, JVGroup received very few applications proposing ventures that address the topics of Israel or diversity within the Jewish community. While these are two of the more difficult issues with which the community grapples, there are already established organizations working in these fields that are less than 10 years in existence. With Keshet, Jewish Mosaic, Nehirim, and Bechol Lashon, all addressing diversity issues within the Jewish community, the market for meeting these needs may be already saturated. Further, these topics are often tough to

Figure 4: Venture Focus, Self-identified by applicants*

Venture Focus	No. of Applicants
Arts	21%
Community Building	5%
Dating	2%
Diversity/Inclusion	2%
Education	41%
Environment	8%
Feminism/Women's Issues	4%
Food/Nutrition/Agriculture	12%
Health	5%
Human Rights	0%
Israel/Middle East	4%
Leadership	13%
Marketing/Communications/PR	8%
Media	2%
Outreach/Engagement	5%
Philanthropy	6%
Social Justice	15%
Social Services	3%
Spirituality	8%
Technology	8%
Youth Development	7%
Other	5%

*Applicants were allowed to choose up to two venture foci.

tackle, as well as challenging to fund.

Joshua Venture Group is in the unique position to provide emerging Jewish social entrepreneurs with the resources, training, and exposure to take their ideas to scale on a national level. While building upon the strength and values of our shared heritage and traditions, we envision an expanded Jewish landscape — embracing contemporary values, leveraging new technologies, and relying on innovative and sustainable organizational models. Understanding that great ideas do not solely originate from a specific area or age group, benefit from cultivation at the local level, and may require different organizational models allows us to set up the ventures and leaders we support – as well as the Jewish community – for success.