

Evaluation of Lippman Kanfer Foundation for Living Torah's campaign **Free&Fair: Our Duty to Democracy**

INTRODUCTION + CONTEXT

About the Free&Fair Campaign

Lippman Kanfer Foundation for Living Torah launched the Free&Fair (F&F) campaign collaboratively with ignite:action, a brand strategy and digital marketing agency, in Fall 2020 in an effort to support Jewish organizations and leaders educate and prepare their communities for potential election crises. The F&F campaign provided informative, vetted resources; curated and sponsored relevant trainings; and launched a pledge that encouraged organizations to close on Election Day so their staff could vote and/or participate in nonpartisan voter engagement activities.

The campaign directly targeted leaders of Jewish organizations—and especially umbrella organizations—utilizing a “B2B2C” communication strategy: rather than target individual Jewish people, the campaign aimed to reach the broader Jewish community through Jewish leaders with already established networks. Leaders had access to resource- and information-rich emails, networks of and support from other leaders and campaign participants, sponsored and curated training opportunities, and marketing and publicity for their organizations through the F&F campaign website and email series.

About this Evaluation

LKFLT engaged Learning for Action (LFA), an independent evaluation and strategy consulting firm, to conduct an evaluation of the F&F campaign. The evaluation explores the following research questions:

- 1. What were F&F's successes** in supporting Jewish leaders and organizations to feel prepared to respond to election crises in 2020?
- 2. Why was F&F successful** in supporting Jewish leaders and organizations to feel prepared to respond to election crises in 2020, and what could have made it more successful?

To answer these questions, LFA conducted 45-minute one-on-one interviews with 14 campaign stakeholders in February 2021. LFA and LKFLT sought a range of perspectives to inform the interviews, including campaign “champions,” “ambivalent participants,” and “skeptical nonparticipants.” While the evaluation team was successful in connecting with the first two categories of stakeholders, none of the invited “skeptical nonparticipants” elected to participate in interviews.

Evaluation findings will inform LKFLT's strategic decision-making as the foundation determines whether or not it will engage in similar campaigns in future election cycles—and/or between election cycles—and what changes it might make should it choose to launch future campaigns.

Prepared by:



LEARNING *for* ACTION

Prepared for:



IN WHAT WAYS WAS FREE&FAIR SUCCESSFUL?

Interviews with stakeholders surfaced a number of themes demonstrating the successful impact of the Free&Fair campaign, as well as what worked and can be built upon in potential future iterations of the campaign.

F&F served as a trusted anchor point and source for election crises information during a daunting time when organizational leaders did not have bandwidth to determine how best to engage. Many interviewees note that, as organizational leaders, they had deep concerns about the election and a strong interest to do something, but not necessarily the time or capacity to determine how their organization should respond, all while the election was quickly approaching and time was running short. The information and resources disseminated through the F&F campaign offered leaders a sense of agency, and a way for them to play a role in the leadup to and aftermath of the election.

F&F rallied the Jewish community together around potential election crises. The F&F campaign filled a gap in the Jewish community, helping organizations bridge Jewish values with civic engagement in democracy. Interviewees explain that F&F helped to unite the Jewish community in the pursuit of a free and fair election, providing a call to action and the support that organizations needed to be a strong voice and leader in the time leading up to the election.

F&F provided a vehicle through which organizations already engaging in election advocacy could feel that they were working as part of a larger, united network. For some interviewees, the campaign did not necessarily prompt new ideas or ways for their organization to engage, but it did offer a network of support to further legitimize and build the power of their existing advocacy work. The campaign allowed those organizations already taking actions in response to election crises to feel less isolated in their efforts and feel part of a broader community network.

The B2B2C strategy was appropriate and allowed F&F to both define and reach a target audience in the short period of time that the campaign occurred. There is broad consensus among interviewees that targeting organizational leaders, as opposed to running a community-wide campaign, was the right strategy to pursue. Given the short time frame, the direct outreach to leaders allowed F&F to “move more quickly, decisively, and effectively.” This strategy seemed to work particularly well for umbrella organizations that operate a network of members or affiliates, and thus are well positioned to effectively disseminate the materials and resources more broadly.

“There aren’t really any funders in the Jewish community right now, except LKFLT, that play a public and leadership role in bridging the Jewish and democracy worlds, bringing the concerns from the democracy space into the Jewish space. ... In those broader democracy spaces, there weren’t any other Jewish campaigns that were doing that.”

- F&F Stakeholder Interviewee

“It was helpful to feel that the actions we were taking were not only us, but part of a network of people on the same page. [...] Seeing the work play out across the board helped us to feel backed up in our own advocacy work.”

- F&F Stakeholder Interviewee

WHAT IMPACTED THE CAMPAIGN'S SUCCESS, WHETHER TO HELP OR HINDER?

In addition to identifying evidence of the Free&Fair campaign's success, interviewees named important external factors that served to help or hinder the success of the campaign.

The polarized political landscape meant that nothing could be perceived as truly nonpartisan. While the materials and resources shared through the campaign are legally nonpartisan, and the campaign aspired to position itself as ideologically nonpartisan, the political climate made it nearly impossible for the campaign to be perceived as nonpartisan.

The campaign existed in a very short timeframe and launched only six weeks before the election. Interviewees remark that F&F made a lot happen in the timeframe available, but the limited time may have been a barrier to engaging those beyond LKFLT's established network.

LKFLT's role as a funder gave the campaign strong leverage, yet some wonder if its relationships and progressive reputation in the field limited the campaign's reach.

Interviewees largely believe that LKFLT's brand and reputation as a trusted source in the Jewish community had a direct positive influence on the campaign's ability to get people on board in such a quick timeframe. Yet, interviewees also note

that it was likely LKFLT's reputation as an ideologically progressive funder, coupled with the highly polarized political climate, that prevented more ideologically conservative organizations from getting on board.

"This is a big structural challenge right now. [...] You have a partisan-ized set of issues that are fundamental to democracy – democracy itself becomes a partisan issue. That is an incredibly dangerous set of dynamics to work with."

- F&F Stakeholder Interviewee

"The fact that they are a funder gave them leverage, no question. [...] I think their positioning as a left progressive funder probably made it harder because their colleagues on the right understand who they are, their values and their politics and have skepticism about their motivation."

- F&F Stakeholder Interviewee

The implications of COVID presented unique opportunities and challenges for F&F:

Engaging organizational leaders amidst crisis: For some interviewees, the campaign capitalized on the moment by supporting leaders during a time when they were already overwhelmed by the public health crisis and navigating major shifts in their communities and everyday operations as a result of the pandemic.



The Election Day Pledge: Several interviewees note that the pandemic worked against the success of the pledge, making it harder to build support during a time when many organizations were already offering extensive time off and when the rise in early and absentee voting made Election Day closures less necessary.



Nonpartisan messaging: One interviewee shares that, amidst the challenge of crafting messages that would not be perceived as polarizing, COVID offered an opportunity to discuss the election through a more nonpartisan angle by focusing on voting safety and access, rather than just voting rights.



WHERE IS FURTHER EXPLORATION AND REFLECTION NEEDED?

There are some less straightforward findings from the evaluation that warrant further reflection and meaning making among LKFLT board and staff.

Addressing the complexity of nonpartisanship and its relationship to LKFLT's organizational values and strategy. While the materials shared through the campaign were indeed legally nonpartisan, there are conflicting views among interviewees on the extent to which the information was ideologically nonpartisan. Some interviewees believe F&F came across as politically neutral as possible, while others felt the material was clearly left-leaning.

Suggestions for engaging ideologically conservative organizations for potential future campaigns:



Addressing the question of LKFLT's role as a funder and leader on this work going forward. There are conflicting perceptions among interviewees about whether LKFLT should take the lead on this kind of strategy, and whether doing so could serve to further the foundation's impact or detract from it. Many interviewees note the invaluable role of having a funder mobilizing the Jewish community in support of democracy, while others raise different perspectives on what it means to have a funder lead such work, pointing to the complexity of power dynamics and role confusion.

Reflections on Evaluation Findings from LKFLT

As LKFLT staff and board reflect on these findings, we're wrestling with several critical questions:

- As a foundation with both grantmaking and operating tools at our disposal, what are the best ways for us to engage the Jewish community in support of free and fair elections?
- Given the extent to which historically nonpartisan norms and institutions—free and fair elections, the rule of law, a commitment to nonviolence—have become increasingly partisan-ized, how might we position ourselves to advocate for them most effectively?
- How might we support collaboration between Jewish community efforts in support of free and fair elections and broader multi-faith and secular efforts?
- How might we build on the Election Day Pledge to identify and support meaningful and accessible forms of engagement for Jewish leaders and organizations? For instance, how can we support organizations in discussing campaign activities with their boards and donors? How can we support organizations to integrate campaign activities into their existing efforts and obligations?