

A Study Guide on Tucson's SRE Task Force Report

A Case Study on a Jewish Communal Approach to SRE & DEI

1

Introduction

2

About the Tucson SRE Task Force

3

Consistent Conversations & Learning

3

Challenges

4

Conclusion

5

Helpful Pages

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Introduction

In November 2020, SRE Network (SRE) commissioned a review of four years (2018-2022) of unique work that several leaders from the Tucson Jewish community undertook. They wanted to collaboratively address safety, respect, and equity across their Jewish organizations and community. The result is [The Tucson SRE Task Force: A Case Study of a Jewish Communal Approach to Safety, Respect, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) written by Phyllis Braun, with the participation of Task Force leaders and members, as well as others from the community. **The goal of the Case Study report review is “to provide a road map for other Jewish communities that are considering a communal approach to promoting safety, respect, equity, diversity, and inclusion for all.”**

SRE is sharing this report because we believe that this work and approach should be studied by other leaders and organizations who can learn from and replicate what Tucson SRE Task Force members have accomplished. We created this study guide to lift up the essential questions and insights from this important report. We have seen this communal approach raise greater awareness across communities and organizations, help agencies be less siloed in this work, and open the door for broader culture shifts. This approach also provides a network of peers to work with who understand and are part of the same spaces in which you are trying to create change.

SRE applauds the efforts of the Tucson SRE Task Force and their long-view approach to culture change work around gender justice, diversity, and inclusion. The report not only details their work, but delves into the impact of their efforts, as well as challenges that arose and how they were navigated. The Jewish community in Tucson, Arizona, is among the first to advance the work of safety, respect, and equity in a collective manner.



About the Tucson SRE Task Force

Spearheaded by two communal leaders, Todd Rockoff and Michelle Blumenberg, the Task Force consisted of leaders from a cross section of Jewish organizations in Tucson including the **Tucson Jewish Community Center, Jewish Family & Children’s Services of Southern Arizona, Jewish Philanthropies of Southern Arizona, University of Arizona Hillel Foundation,** and the **Tucson Jewish Museum & Holocaust Center.** In coming together, these leaders worked toward a common goal of strengthening safety, respect, equity, diversity, and inclusion in the wider Tucson Jewish communal landscape, while also respecting the needs, capacity, and starting point of each respective organization involved. The report makes it clear that engaging in SRE and DEI work requires: financial commitments and funding, organizational priority and bandwidth, foundational knowledge, training and implementation of what is learned, and honest analysis and assessments.

The report aims to answer four key questions:

1. **How well is SRE integrated into the Tucson Jewish community?**
2. **Has the Task Force strengthened the workplace culture of Tucson’s Jewish community?**
3. **Have other intersectional issues such as race and disability been a part of the work?**
4. **How have member organizations implemented the principles of SRE?**

The Task Force’s shared mission and vision were both aspirational and specific. Their roadmap (p. 5) highlights that SRE work is a matter of taking action and providing learning and opportunities for others to do the same. While working on their organizations’ policies individually, the Task Force as a whole had productive conversations about the different lenses through which to view SRE and DEI including a gender lens, equity lens, generational lens, and more.





Consistent Conversations and Learning

A communal approach has the ability to influence others to follow your lead. Leaders of the initiative were inspired by champions of this work in other cities, communities, and organizations. Task Force leaders then went on to teach others outside of their community about their approach and what they have learned through it. Continued conversations were regularly held with Task Force peers, others in the community interested in this work, and experts in the field. Several relationships with experts evolved into strong partnerships. In one case, an expert joined a Task Force organization’s board, which in turn deepened that organization’s commitment to SRE work.

The Task Force engaged in ongoing learning, and subsequently shared their newfound knowledge with members of their community. They held community wide events including panels, workshops, and changemaker trainings for leaders. Each had elements of learning, practical application, and discussion about the material covered. A wide range of audiences were invited to participate including board members, lay leaders, and professional staff from synagogues, camps, and other Jewish organizations. Some organizational leaders took part in additional learning, including a train the trainer program from [Ta’amod](#) focused on respectful workplaces and Tucson joined a [Sacred Spaces](#) pilot cohort to work on the [Keilim](#) policy toolkit.





Challenges

This work is not without its challenges, some of which are highlighted as one gains a deeper understanding of the issues. Often when challenges arise, the knowledge already gained allows them to be addressed proactively. The Task Force as a whole, as well as the individuals within it, encountered several challenges in their work which the report acknowledges. For example, soon after the Task Force held two workshops for board members, lay leaders, and professional staff, the COVID-19 pandemic broke out in March 2020 and the Task Force's plans had to be put on pause. The report outlines how leaders applied what they had already learned regarding creating safe, respectful, and equitable workplaces as they made difficult decisions regarding layoffs, compensation, moving to remote work, and more.

Other challenges that arose included addressing disrespectful behavior by and towards staff, board members, and participants of Tucson Jewish organizations, as well as racial justice issues. Some of these issues drove home the need to integrate SRE and DEI work, leading to the creation of new policies. These policies included consequences for those who breach them, and involve the engagement of DEI consultants to deliver workshops. **It is clear that investing in safety, respect, and equity does not mean an organization ever achieves a definitive level of success in these areas because this work is ever evolving.**

Additional considerations in this communal approach remain, including:

- How best to **involve synagogues**?
- How to **attain funding** for potential outside investigations that may become necessary?
- How to **increase awareness** of the Task Force's goals to the wider community?
- How to ensure the Task Force's work **reaches those most in need of making a culture shift** across Tucson's Jewish community (including staff members who work at the various organizations in which members of the Task Force lead)?

Conclusion

The various organizations involved in the Task Force have different experiences regarding the work they are doing, but all represented organizations that have made tangible change. Beyond funding, having **consistent champions of this work, flexibility, and intentionality** were key drivers of this change. Additionally, mutual safety, respect, and equity must be fostered across several levels, including organizational boards and leaders, professional staff and volunteers, and participants or members of those organizations.

It is evident that the collaborative work of the Task Force has led to tangible change regarding SRE and DEI across Tucson’s Jewish community and in individual organizations and agencies.

Current Member Organizations
Tucson SRE Task Force

Jewish Philanthropies²
of SOUTHERN ARIZONA

JFCS
of Southern Arizona

University of Arizona
Hillel

TUCSON
JEWISH
MUSEUM &
HOLOCAUST
CENTER

J

Vision + Mission

We envision a Tucson community, inspired by Jewish values, in which all people are safe, respected, trusted, valued, and supported.

We foster an authentically open environment where individuals are accepted for their unique contributions, strengths, and expertise, are provided equitable access to opportunities, and as a group are encouraged to advocate for fairness for one another.

tucson jewish community | in partnership with
sre
safety respect equity



Helpful Pages

- If you are interested in engaging in the work of safety, respect, and equity from a **communal approach**, review the [Tucson SRE Task Force Road Map](#) on **p. 5**.
- To better understand the **nature and extent of harassment** in Jewish communal life and the experiences of those who were made to endure them, please read **pp. 27-33**. You can also use these pages as conversation prompts in your workplace or communal space, as well as to spark ideas for hosting similar programs in your community or city. Additional context for this program is provided on **p. 8**.
- Review the ideas written on **pp. 33-35** to see what your sector, organization, or community can commit to improving when **creating spaces that are safe, respectful, and equitable**.
- For a sample Code of Conduct, review the **Tucson JCC Member, Participant, Guest and Staff Code of Conduct** on **pp. 35-36**. For some additional thoughts on the Code and its consideration as a *b'rit* or covenant, read **p. 14**.

As noted in the report, several Tucson Jewish organizations participated in a cohort learning program with **Sacred Spaces**. The J, with support of the **Keilim** toolkit, updated and wrote a new code of personnel practices. These **policies** were passed by the board and written with the intention of ensuring that they live their values.

Tucson SRE Task Force Road Map

1. Hold gathering for agency and synagogue professional leaders to introduce SRE concepts
2. Ask each agency/synagogue to meet with its Board about joining SRE Network
3. Establish a Task Force with professional leadership from community agencies
4. Evaluate resources to animate the process and secure necessary funding
5. Create an opportunity for Board and professional leadership to engage with the work, such as a large event/seminar/workshop
6. Create Task Force mission and vision statements
7. Hold training workshops for Board members and staff
8. Continue discussions with agency/synagogue Boards to broaden understanding of SRE topics
9. Revisit organizations that may not have committed to SRE Network and complete SRE standards assessments
10. Consider organizational culture trainings with *Talמוד: Stand Up!* for professionals at local agencies/synagogues
11. Use Sacred Spaces Keilim Policy Toolkit to complete policy and procedures reviews for each organization
12. Continue outreach to uncommitted agencies/synagogues
13. Complete SRE Network annual renewals and standards self-assessments at each organization

p.5

Appendices

Appendix A - Stories of Harassment in Jewish Communal Life

Revealing #metoo as #wetoo in Jewish Communal Life
JCPA Version
April 24, 2018
Stories of Harassment in Jewish Communal Life

Appendix B

Top "I Commit To ..."
Statements from the May 2019
"From #MeToo to #WeToo" Event in Tucson

Appendix D

Page 1 of the Tucson JCC Member, Participant, Guest and Staff Code of Conduct

The Tucson JCC is committed to providing a safe, welcoming, inclusive, and equitable environment for all members, participants, guests, and staff.

As adopters of the Commitment to Safe, Respectful, and Equitable Jewish Workplaces and Communal Spaces, we promise to implement comprehensive standards in our organization to achieve the goals of safety, respect, and equity. We adhere to a high ethical and legal standard for prevention and response to harassment and discrimination.

From top: p. 27; p. 33; p. 35

Best Practice - The Tucson J's Code of Conduct

One effective vehicle for conveying the concepts of SRE is the Tucson J's Member, Participant, Guest and Staff Code of Conduct¹ which could be adapted by other organizations.

All Tucson J members were required to sign off on the multi-page document, which was distributed to members and staff in fall 2021, and is posted prominently on the Tucson J website. The Code of Conduct references the organization's "Commitment to Safe, Respectful, and Equitable Jewish Workplaces and Communal Spaces" and lays out policies for everything from authorized methods of gaining entrance to the facility to reporting suspicious packages. It states that "All people using the JCC are expected to behave in a mature and responsible manner, and to respect the rights and dignity of all other members, participants, guests, and staff," and encourages reporting of suspicious or inappropriate behaviors to JCC staff. The Code of Conduct outlines "disruptive behaviors" in which members, participants, guests, and staff agree not to engage. These include, among others, "Angry, vulgar, or abusive language including swearing, name calling, and shouting," "Any demonstration of sexual activity, or sexual contact with another person," "Harassment or intimidation by words, gestures, body language, or menacing behavior," and "Carrying or concealing weapons, objects, or devices that may be perceived as weapons."

The Code of Conduct goes on to specify that "The JCC, through its CEO and Board of Directors, reserves the right to remove from the premises any individual acting in inappropriate manners, and further reserves the rights for additional disciplinary actions including but not limited to: cancellation of membership, or involvement of local law enforcement."

When asked how this was received by members, Rockoff says, "We may not have changed things dramatically but we wanted each member to see the Code of Conduct and sign the Code of Conduct about the way that they will behave here at the J, how they will talk to staff, how staff will talk to them. It really becomes kind of a *b'rit* (covenant) under the safety, respect, and equity guidelines."

The majority of members have been wonderful about signing, he says. "A few said, 'I don't want to sign this and it's ridiculous' - we said, 'That's fine, but you won't be able to be here if you don't sign that', and most people are pretty reasonable at that point."

¹ See Appendix D

p. 14