Welcome to the *Tikkun Olam: Our Turn* program guide! This act of love was developed thanks to the Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans Strategic Impact grant and the expertise of staff and alumni from Avodah who had long dreamed of a way to share our Jewish social justice expertise with young people in our communities. We had heard from rabbis in New Orleans that there was a desire to deepen the “mitzvah project” experience at b’nai mitzvah time—to provide better context and mentoring for our communities’ young adults as they stood on the threshold of adulthood. New Orleans is a very special place, with a strong and loving Jewish community; it was the perfect place to pilot this curriculum, which is both pluralistic and usable regardless of denomination. And, sure enough, participants in the inaugural program came from Reform, Orthodox, and Conservative communities—all able to learn and grow together. It’s powerful and impactful for b’nai mitzvah students, but can be useful for young Jews in other contexts as well—at camp, at day schools, or as part of a post-b’nai mitzvah curriculum to help teens learn how Judaism can help them be of use to a world in need of healing.

This curriculum includes six one-and-a-half-hour or two-hour sessions. It seeks to lay a basic foundation for impactful social justice work grounded in Jewish wisdom to give students the tools to evaluate different kinds of solutions intended to address injustice and ultimately to empower them to make connections to organizations they believe will help correct serious social problems.

This is both an educational curriculum that teaches young people how to think about injustice as well as a practical guide for getting involved with the solution(s). This curriculum is also intended as a cohort experience so that students can learn from each other and form meaningful communities centered around social justice.

We are grateful for the many people who came together to make this project happen, and to our wonderful Avodah alumni Alysse Fuchs and Rachel Kipnes who took on this project, created the curriculum, facilitated the classes, and built community with our first cohorts of *Tikkun Olam: Our Turn* students.
SESSION 1:
WHAT IS SOCIAL JUSTICE?

GOALS:

1. Participants will walk away with a deeper understanding of the following ideas: social justice, equality and equity, and tzedakah, chesed, and tzedek.

2. Participants will have fun, bond with each other, and begin to see themselves as a cohesive group of peers engaging in this learning.

FRAMING

During our time together, we will explore how Jewish ideas ask us as Jews to do social justice work. Some terms and ideas we will become familiar with are tzedekah, tzedek, chesed, mitzvot, and tikkun olam. Some of these ideas might be familiar to you, and some might be new. As a group, we are going to discuss and learn together in order to ground ourselves in what Judaism has to say, and we will use this knowledge to develop social justice projects.

INTRODUCTION GAMES (15 MINUTES)

Note: This is an opportunity for students to learn each other’s names and to warm up into the session. Any kind of icebreaker can be used, but with a preference for one that’s thematically connected to the session, rather than about students’ favorite ice creams. Here’s an example:

Everyone stands in a circle. Toss the ball to someone and say your own name. He tosses to someone else and says his own name, until everyone gets the ball. Repeat the exact same order until folks get used to it. Challenge everyone to do it faster and faster, saying “How about doing the whole circle in twenty seconds? Ten seconds? Five?” Keep repeating the one rule: The ball must be tossed in the same order every time. Eventually, students will start to ask questions about changing the format. Stick to the one rule. It’s likely that someone will speak up and say, “Let’s stand in order,” or “We’ll all put our hand on the ball at the same time,” and then they can get the entire thing to under five seconds. It’s a fun challenge to see who turns up as leaders—and the moral is, “Sometimes we have to pay attention to what our actual restrictions are and work within the system,” or “Sometimes we impose societal rules that aren’t always prescribed for us—all it takes is for some folks to speak up and say—‘Let’s do this differently.’”

TIMELINE:

• 15 minutes: Introduction, Games
• 45 minutes: Tzedekah, Tzedek, Chesed
• 25 minutes: Babies Coming Down the River
• 5 minutes: Closing

TOTAL TIME: 1.5 HOURS

SUPPLIES:

1. Small ball for icebreaker
2. Computer for showing video
3. Handout 1:1: Maimonides’ Ladder, with each ranking cut out individually and another copy of the handout for each participant in the correct order
4. Handout 1:2: Equity vs. Equality
5. Handout 1:3: Babies Coming Down the River
TZEDEKAH, TZEDEK, CHESED (45 MINUTES)

1. Paired discussion (15 mins)
   Tell the group that tzedakah is often defined as charity money, but perhaps you’ll have another definition of it by the end of the session. In hevruta (partners), using Session 1, Handout 1, ask participants to lay them out in the order of strongest to weakest. You can even cut up the methods into strips so that they don’t have a preconceived idea of what Maimonides’ order is, and lay them out according to the order that they think is best. Ask hevruta to discuss these questions:
   a. Which method is the best way to give tzedakah? What logic are you using to create your order?
   b. What is social justice? We hear that word all the time, but what does it actually mean?
      i. Facilitator: One definition of social justice that you can use is, “Justice in terms of the distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society.”

2. Group Discussion (30 minutes)
   a. Report back from hevruta conversations. Share one thing you talked about with your hevruta partner.
   c. Review terms from video: chesed, tzedek, tzedakah.
      i. Chesed definition: An act of lovingkindness that is voluntary and individual.
      ii. Tzedakah definition: Donating money to those who are in need or to services that are helping those in need.
      iii. Tzedek definition: Creating a better world by changing the systems or structures that create inequality.
      iv. Look at Session 1, Handout 2: Equality vs. Equity vs. Justice, which is referred to in the video.
         1. What does this image convey?
         2. What are the differences between equality, equity, and justice? Do you think these ideas overlap with chesed, tzedek, and tzedakah?
         v. Do you think one idea is more important than another?
         vi. Which idea are you most drawn to?
   d. Give participants Session 1, Handout 1, with the correct order according to Maimonides, if they did not have the correct order originally. Do you see any of Maimonides’ methods of giving as being tzedek / social justice? Which ones reflect social justice and which ones don’t?

BABIES COMING DOWN THE RIVER (25 MINUTES)

1. Break into two groups (or more, depending on the total number of participants).
2. Instruct each group to read through the story and prepare a skit that summarizes what they’ve read (15 minutes).
3. Group Discussion (10 minutes)
   a. What were your initial reactions to the story?
   b. What would you do if you were in this town?
   c. Do you think one response was better than the other?
   d. Why is it important to get at the root problem (heading upstream)?
   e. Why is it important to address the immediate need (getting babies directly out of the river)?
   f. Is it possible to address both the immediate need and root causes? What about if we have limited time and energy? What might this look like?

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

It’s taught in Pirkei Avot (2:16) that Rabbi Tarfon would say, “You are not obligated to finish the task, but neither are you free to desist from it.”

1. How does this quote relate to social justice? To community? To our Jewish identity or obligations?
2. This is the time in our Jewish lives when we are starting to take responsibility for our communities. This series is about making long-term choices for how we will live out the rest of our lives; it is not about completing a single task and checking off a box.
SESSION 3:
SOCIAL CHANGE

GOALS:

1. Participants will build a foundation for understanding what makes a strong social justice project.
2. Familiarize participants with the Methods of Social Change Wheel so they can begin to locate their project ideas within the wheel.
3. Participants will narrow down their ideas and decide on an issue area on which to focus.

REVIEW IDEAS FOR PROJECTS FROM SESSION 2 (5 MINUTES)

BRAINSTORM DISCUSSION: WHAT MAKES A GOOD PROJECT? (15 MINUTES)

1. Ask: What makes a good project? Ask a note-taker to write a list on large chart paper. Some points to look for or highlight:
   a. Goals can be reached.
   b. Project helps people.
   c. Project is relevant to the needs of the community.
   d. It is sustainable and will be able to continue without your participation or leadership.
   e. You learn from it, and you can share your knowledge with others.
   f. You can involve others.

METHODS OF SOCIAL CHANGE WHEEL (45 MINUTES)

1. Hand out the wheel, and give students a few minutes to look over it on their own.
2. As a group, read each blurb to understand what the method is describing. Make sure to give a few examples of each method (20 minutes).
3. Watch videos as examples of methods described in the Social Change Wheel. These links include two New Orleans issues—you might want to find videos relevant to local causes, movements, or organizations (15 minutes).
   a. Harvard Workers (bit.ly/2lSaNN)
      i. Example of Direct Action Strategy
   b. ERACISM meeting (first 1.5 minutes) (bit.ly/2l9Nxc)
      i. Example of Advocacy through Community Education
   c. Ninth ward market (bit.ly/2wJQHwA)
      i. Example of Community/Economic Development

TIMELINE:

• 5 minutes: Review Ideas for Projects
• 15 minutes: What Makes a Good Project?
• 45 minutes: Methods of Social Change?
• 20 minutes: Local Issues and Mapping the Landscape

TOTAL TIME: 1 HOUR, 25 MINUTES

SUPPLIES:

1. Large chart paper
2. Markers
3. Handout 3:1: Methods of Social Change
4. Computer for showing video
5. Handout 3:2: Local Issues (to be made by facilitator)
6. Handout 3:3: Mapping the Landscape
SESSION 3, HANDOUT 1: METHODS OF SOCIAL CHANGE WHEEL

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP
Launching a venture for the common good. While this can include the creation of new non-profit organizations, most examples of social entrepreneurship are employing more traditional, for-profit models towards social missions, like B-corporations.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
Broad term applied to the practices of civic leaders, activists and involved citizens to improve various aspects of local communities. Some examples could include economic development or workforce development and other types of skills training.

DIRECT SERVICE
Directly meeting the material or spiritual needs of people by providing free or low-cost access to goods, services, or communal spaces.

PHILANTHROPY
Giving money to support projects or organizations that address a need or issue.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING
Organizing is the process of building organizations of oppressed people who use their collective power to win changes in people's lives and shift the balance of power.

ADVOCACY
Using argument and persuasion to achieve a particular action or change. Often advocacy is directed specifically toward lawmakers or policymakers to persuade them to pass or implement a particular policy. Businesses and corporations can be the target for advocacy as well.

EDUCATION
As its own method of social change (beyond its function as a form of direct service), education in the largest sense is any act or experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character, or physical ability of an individual, and from there potentially an effect on society.