



This document reflects 2023 Camp Insights Survey responses related to the following societal trends:



Note that respondents rated each societal trend using the following prompt - **Please rate the extent to which the societal trend below creates significant opportunities or challenges for your camp over the next 5 years** – using a 1 to 5 scale where **1 = Not Significant** and **5 = Very Significant**. *The full list of trends and their ratings can be found in the appendix of the full [2023 JCamp 180 Camp Insights Report](#).*

In addition, respondents were asked to share areas of both strength and growth in their efforts related to **each of these trends, as well as Engaging Donors for Annual, Capital, or Legacy Giving and New Revenue Models**. This document summarizes the responses camps reported – we hope these ideas help other camps as they determine how to best respond to these societal trends.

Rising Expenses and Alternative Revenue Models

“We sometimes feel like we are holding on with one hand rodeo style trying not fall off the bucking bull that is our current economic environment.”

For the first time this year, we asked about the significance of rising operating expenses. And, understandably, given significant inflation in food, utilities, insurance, buses labor and other goods and services important to camps, it was the top-rated trend.

Perhaps, the most common strategy is to “review all expense items” and “cut costs where we can, including new games and craft materials that are less expensive, replacement of high cost food (e.g., meat) with lower cost items and renegotiating contracts with vendors.” Some camps mentioned renegotiating contracts or finding new vendors to reduce costs, including moving rental sites for camp.

A number of camps also are considering offering “shorter or session length options, to respond to market interest, including for lower cost options.

Camps also are increasing tuition to ensure economic viability. Unfortunately, this will impact tuition and scholarships.” It raises the issue as to “What is the ideal price point to make camp accessible and competitive for as many Jewish families as possible?”

In response to these budget pressures, camps also are naturally turning to increased fundraising “We are using inflation and the rising cost of food, supplies, salary etc. very directly in our fundraising” as well as vigorously pursuing government and other grants.

One bolder conclusion, reflecting the sentiments of several respondents, was that “We need to change the conversation with funders.” And another: “We have a fee-for-service model that makes us revenue positive for the Jewish community.”

New Revenue Model(s)

As part of addressing camp’s financial challenges, for the first time, we asked about new revenue models. In addition to growing traditional revenue sources – enrollment and tuition fees, fundraising and grants, and sale of camp merchandise, camps are dialing up other approaches as follows.

Rentals/retreats

Many camps mentioned that they already rent out camp during the offseason - some of them are looking to grow that business (more mid-week options (i.e., school groups); corporate retreats; weddings; bnai mitzvahs). Other camps that are considering growing year-round rentals noted the need to invest in their facilities (i.e., winterizing camps).

Some camps are focused on using camp during the shoulder season for both new revenue and engaging existing constituencies. This includes, for example: offering summer enrichment to campers/families; expanding family camp offerings; and providing more opportunities for alumni to enjoy camp.

Other year-round offerings

Camps are also finding ways to raise revenue throughout the year away from camp. These include: before and after school programs; online offerings (sometimes with suggested donations vs. required payments); and alternative winter break programming.

New Summer Programs

Many camps discussed offering new revenue-producing programs at camp during the summer. These include culinary camp, STEAM Camp, environmental education programs, other specialty camps, and new family camps. Several camps are offering new, short “taste of” camps for younger campers.

Other Revenue Sources

Camps also reported pursuing new revenue streams, including offering Mental Health First-Aid Certification training in their community and opening a day camp.

Fundraising

Camps mentioned a new emphasis on fundraising to help bridge the financial gap. This includes a renewed focus on donor stewardship; implementation of monthly giving and other annual giving societies; running crowdfunding campaigns, focused on alumni; researching and applying for new grants, both within and beyond the Jewish community; and launching/expanding legacy and/or endowment campaigns.

In this year’s survey, competition for fundraising dollars from other charities was the 9th ranked trend. Given the rising costs of camp and Jewish living, and the expressed high need for enhanced fundraising throughout the survey, the importance of fundraising is still a high priority. Camps reported on the following fundraising strategies.

- Increasing engagement and “touches” with existing donors. This includes more “personal touches,” “building relationships,” “tours of camp,” and “making sure they feel seen and thanked.” Many camps are more fully building out their stewardship process to appreciate donors for their ongoing commitment to our camp.
- Keeping the community informed, including through “new marketing materials that highlight the role that Jewish camping plays,” as well as messaging camp’s unique contribution and “stand out moments.”
- Strengthening outreach to alumni as a priority, encouraging alumni “to move the camp up their list of preferred charities.”
- Fostering a “culture of philanthropy across the organization and among our families.”
- Enhancing tried and true fundraising techniques such as better communicating the camps wants and needs, how money is used, developing a case for support, and establishing a year-round schedule for fundraising activities.
- Strengthening resources committed to fundraising. This includes enhancing Development, Alumni, and Legacy Committees, and strengthening board composition and its ability to better “lean into fundraising.” Some camps are also increasing their staff professional development.

Perceived/actual rising cost of living Jewishly

The perceived/actual cost of living Jewishly rose in the rankings from #13 to the trend ranked #6 in its implications for Jewish camps. The problem was expressed plainly and clearly by many respondents:

- “It’s difficult to balance the rising costs of running our program with making our program accessible financially.”
- “At some point, we just can’t keep raising tuition each summer.”
- “We have yet to develop an approach to combat the rising costs of Jewish camping but expect middle class families (primarily) to pull out or not begin the Jewish overnight camp journey due to the price tag over the next 5 years.”

Some despaired of finding an answer while others put forward the following approaches:

- Communicate “how Jewish camp is less expensive than secular camps while also “creating more awareness and access to campership funds of the camp and others.”
- Lower prices for those in Jewish communities least able to afford camp.
- Continue to increase financial aid, including through working with Federation, JCC and other partners.
- “Simplify the scholarship application form for middle income families.”
- Offer greater incentives for first year as “many times it’s hard to get families in the door after they see the cost of camp enabling us to “approach them more easily about scholarship in the future.”
- Offer “shorter or session length options to give more cost flexibility.”
- And, of course, raise more funds and endowments as “the only thing we can do is to raise money to help offset the total actual cost of camp.”