

**The United Synagogue of
Conservative Judaism**



The 2009

**Solomon Schechter Awards
for Synagogue Excellence**

GUIDELINES and CRITERIA

*to be presented at the
Biennial Convention
December 6-10, 2009*

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Solomon Schechter Award Guidelines

Please review and follow these guidelines when applying for a Solomon Schechter award. Entries must be in our hands by the deadline of 5:00 pm Eastern time, Monday, **April 17, 2009**.

1. United Synagogue's Solomon Schechter Awards program recognizes congregations, not subgroups or affiliates. Therefore, please be sure that all entries are submitted by the congregation. We do not accept submissions from separate departments, programs, or people from the congregation.
2. Multiple entries are allowed but only one entry per award category. Please choose the category for each entry based on the printed guidelines and criteria, and indicate that category on the application.
3. You may put more than one entry in a box, but each entry must have its own application. You may copy the application form [or download the application from www.uscj.org] if you need more application forms.
4. Entries are accepted and judged based on your responses to the guidelines and criteria in each of the award category. We provide guidelines and criteria to simplify the application process and to help the judges to evaluate entries. *You need not respond to every item in the guidelines.* You may describe your entry in narrative form; be sure to include samples of all supporting materials. We encourage materials be submitted in *green formats*. Provide as much in electronic [CD or DVD] media as possible. The web site awards must be submitted in electronic form.
5. **Only congregations in good financial standing as of JUNE 30, 2009 are eligible to receive an award.**
6. Each entry must meet the basic criteria stipulated for its award category. To win an award, an entry must demonstrate extraordinary characteristics or unusual and outstanding aspects that go beyond the expected norms. Entries within award and congregational size categories are compared to each other.
7. We plan to award one gold and one silver award for each congregational size division for each category.
8. **Please note: Materials submitted will not be returned.** All submissions become the property of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism for its use. United Synagogue reserves the right to use materials from the submissions, in whole or in part, with appropriate credit, in materials to be produced or distributed by United Synagogue
9. Award-winning entries will be on display at United Synagogue's biennial convention in December 2009. We strongly encourage representatives from the award-winning congregations to attend the convention to accept the awards and to share information about the programs.
10. Applications **must** include an executive summary (**with a maximum of 2-3 brief paragraphs**) on the summary form sheet on the reverse side of the application.
11. The application must be signed as indicated on the application form.
12. Applications and supporting materials must be shipped by delivery services that allow for package tracking (such as Federal Express, USPS Priority Mail or UPS). Materials **MUST** be in our possession by the deadline of **April 17, 2009**. Entries, which include application, supporting material and summary, must be sent to:
Solomon Schechter Awards - The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism
Rapaport House – 10th Floor
820 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017

For additional or clarifying information, please talk to our staff consultant, **Aaron L. Kischel**, at the **New England office of United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism**
Phone: 617-964-8210 e-mail: kischel@uscj.org



I. ADMINISTRATION

BULLETINS

Bulletins are judged for the way congregational resources are used creatively and imaginatively to produce a regular publication that is relevant to the congregation. Please tell us how often the publication appears and how often it gets out on time, and be sure to include at least three issues.

There are two sub-groupings in this category:

A. Bulletins edited, designed and laid out by people who are professionals in graphic design, whether paid or volunteer.

B. Bulletins edited, designed and laid out by people who are **not** professionals in graphic design, paid or volunteer.

Bulletins are judged on these criteria:

1. Presentation of general congregational data, such as schedules of activities, announcements and explanations of projects, social announcements, holiday readings, etc.
2. Presentation of Jewish educational material, looking at both form and content.
3. Coverage of related organizations, for example, news of the United Synagogue or other organizations with the Conservative movement.
4. Content -- quality of headlines, writing, and editing.
5. Layout -- overall design, style, readability, use of space, and creativity.
6. Presentation of e-bulletins.

FUND RAISING

Awards will be considered for excellence and unique approaches in fundraising. There are three subcategories:

A. development programs [e.g., endowments, planned giving]

B. capital programs [e.g., building fund, capital improvements]

C. general fundraising programs. [for support of operating budget]

1. Prepare a detailed outline and goals of the project. Is it ongoing or short term?
2. Detail the plan including the committee structure.
3. Indicate the role of the Rabbi(s), Executive Director, other professional staff, outside professional assistance and laity.
4. Describe the creative, unique or unusual aspects of the project.
5. Describe the methods used to educate and involve the congregation and/or the wider community in the project.
6. Describe the degree of involvement by the total membership and/or wider community.

INCLUSION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Jewish values teach that every human being is created in God's image and is, therefore, to be valued. The purpose of this award is to honor those congregations that have made the commitment to be totally inclusive. They have taken steps to ensure that they are physically, attitudinally and programmatically accessible so that individuals with disabilities and their families across all ages are welcomed and are enabled to participate fully in all aspects of congregational life.

In recognition of the many challenges in becoming an inclusive congregation, please describe the steps you have taken toward reaching Goal A and/or Goal B below. Please describe planned future steps to reach full inclusion.

Goal A: Removal of physical, architectural and attitudinal barriers which make it difficult for persons with disabilities to access and move around in the synagogue building, or participate in congregational worship services



and activities. Example of these steps include curb cuts, designated accessible parking spaces, ramps, proper lighting and sound systems (such as assisted listening devices), availability of *siddurim* in alternative formats – such as large print, Braille, etc.

Goal B: Steps taken in formal and informal programming to accommodating individuals with special learning needs from early childhood through adult years. These settings include early childhood education, religious school, Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation, confirmation, youth groups, etc.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Leadership development in our synagogues is an ongoing and multifaceted process. This category recognizes congregations that have done substantial work in building quality Jewish leaders for the congregation and community.

Leadership development may include enhancing skills in: reaching out to members; improved quality of board, meetings; clarifying the characteristics of Jewish leadership; strengthening committees; finding and motivating volunteers; building partnerships between lay and professional leaders; studying leadership from a Jewish traditional perspective; emulating the leadership examples of Jewish men and women, past and present; developing programs based on mitzvah observance; management of congregation fiscal operations; transmitting Jewish values from synagogue to home; becoming a confident, competent Conservative Jew.

1. Describe the leadership development work done by your Synagogue since May 2007.
2. Describe the patterns and programs in Jewish leadership you created.
3. How have you concretized your congregation's Mission Statement through action?
4. Describe how your congregation trains current leaders to be better role models of Jewish living.
5. Describe how your congregation trains current leaders to be more effective committee leaders and officers.
6. Describe the board development seminars or sessions you have conducted. What time frame has been used for training.
7. Describe how USCJ leadership development programs (either regional or central USCJ, Sulam or Imun, in which your congregation participated has improved the congregation. Be specific.
8. How has your synagogue's Leadership Development Program achieved these goals?
9. Submit documentation of a synagogue self-evaluation by the Board or independent committee.

LIBRARIES

Each congregational library applying should prepare a detailed statement of goals, functions, and activities of the congregational library program. Particulars of the report should be accompanied by documentation, supportive literature and photographs. Each library will be judged on its own program. The items listed serve as guidelines for your submission.

1. Describe any innovative/creative projects or programs developed by the library since May 2007.
2. What is the regular schedule of the library?
3. What programs of early childhood education or Religious School occur in conjunction with the library?
4. Describe how the various segments of your synagogue population (i.e. teenagers, USYers, senior citizens, etc.) may use the library.
5. In what ways is the library tied in to the congregation's adult education?
6. How do synagogue staff and faculty make use of the library?
7. Does the library host Book Review or Jewish Book Month programs?
8. How does the library serve as a general community resource?
9. How does the library publicize new books and events?



MEMBERSHIP

There are two awards in this category:

- *membership recruitment*
- *membership retention.*

Synagogues are invited to submit model programs, publicity materials, etc., used.

The successful program will do one or more of the following:

1. Convey the message that the synagogue is a welcoming place, so that both members and potential members will feel good about calling the synagogue, stopping by to say hello or to ask a question.
2. Enhance the image of the synagogue by demonstrating that it is receptive to the needs of those it serves.
3. Offer the synagogue staff specific help in communications skills, customer service or sensitivity training.
4. Promote the synagogue or a particular program in a consistent and accurate fashion. How does the program help actualize the synagogue mission statement?
5. Demonstrate how synagogue programs -- from educational activities to social action projects -- help strengthen the synagogue and benefit the entire community.
6. Take into account the special needs of your target audience. For example, is transportation arranged for those who need it? Is babysitting available? Is the program offered at a time which is convenient for the target group?

PUBLICATIONS

Publications of a general nature (not bulletins, newsletters) will be judged on content, purpose, and layout.

1. Content: Originality of concept; quality of presentation
2. Purpose: Success in achieving the goal of the piece (e.g. Does it educate, inspire or entertain the congregation?)
3. Layout: Particularly-use of layout to further goal of piece. including: originality, readability, general design and use of graphics and photos.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Congregations need strategic planning to maintain synagogue vibrancy and vitality; it is needed on a regular basis. The process should include a congregational review as well as a plan for implementation. Entries will be judged on the manner in which the plan was developed and on the process of implementation. We know it often takes more than two years to develop and implement such a plan. We will accept entries of plans that were implemented since May 2007, although the planning may have begun earlier.

*While we recognize the value of having paid outside consultants, **our awards are given to congregations who do substantive planning work, not for following the plan given them, even as we recognize the value and amount of work that entails.***

1. Describe the structure of the Strategic Planning Committee and its relation to and with the synagogue Board.
2. Describe the nature of the review process:
 - a. Did it review the mission and vision of the congregation?
 - b. Did it review the congregation's infrastructure?
3. Explain how the congregation was involved in the process.
4. Explain how the clergy and professional staff contributed to the process.
5. Describe the implementation procedure.
6. Analyze the success of the plan:
 - a. What were the goals? Were they achieved? What measures were established for determining success?
 - b. What changes have been made in the congregation as a result of the strategic plan?
 - c. What did you learn from your experience in the process of strategic planning?
7. Entry must include a copy of the final report.



WEB SITE (ON-LINE SERVICES)

This entry must be submitted electronically. It should describe the synagogue web site and how it is used by congregants, prospective members and outside individuals. Please include urls of web pages that you would like to highlight and feel are unique. The most objective standard to be applied to these entries is creative and imaginative utilization of congregational information to produce a regularly updated web site. In submitting your entry, please state how often the web site is updated; be sure to highlight all interactive areas that appear on the site.

Entries without the congregation's URL will not be accepted.

There are two sub-groupings in this category:

- A. Web sites designed, laid out and maintained by people who are IT/web professionals, whether paid or volunteer.
 - B. Web sites designed, laid out and maintained by people who are **not** IT/web professionals, whether paid or volunteer.
1. Presentation of general congregational information, such as schedules of activities, projects, social announcements, holiday reading, professionals' communications, etc.
 2. Presentation of Jewish Educational & Youth/USY materials is judged on both the nature of the information disseminated and the manner of its presentation.
 3. Specific links to related organizations
 4. Text content and journalistic skills will be considered -- appropriateness of headlines, quality of editing, effective use of copy, space and typography.
 5. Web Site Layout -- readability, general design, use of graphics and web authoring tools. Legibility -- creative use of web design, graphics, and use of space.
 6. Web Site Technology -- utilization of internet technology such as audio, video, listserv, chat forms, database, templates, scripts, etc.
 7. Publicity & Communication Tools -- please be sure to highlight how the web site is being used in these areas.
 8. Fund Raising/Advertising -- please be sure to highlight how the web site is being used in this area.
 9. Design and ease of use and viewing on mobile systems such as Treo[®] or Blackberry.[®]

II. EDUCATION

ADULT EDUCATION

- *The description of the program which the congregation submits should include information about the items listed below and any other information that you consider to be pertinent.*
- *Please be sure to include goals and objectives (long and short range) and **any** distinctive features for the program.*
- *Please be sure to indicate if the program was held in connection with other Conservative Synagogues or with other synagogues or community agencies.*

Awards are given for an overall Adult Education program which includes each of the three specific areas listed below.

I. FORMAL PROGRAMS

Formal programs meet for a determined frequency over a given period of time.

1. Indicate long and short term goals of the program.
2. Describe courses actually offered. Include title, brief description of content, name of instructor, name of text used (if any), number, length and frequency of sessions.
3. Note special techniques employed (e.g., audio-visual, multi-media); append sample outlines.

II. INFORMAL PROGRAMS AND NEW INITIATIVES

1. Describe any distinct programs -- home study groups, lecture series (note topics, lectures, number of meetings), adult kallot, Torah luncheon programs, and/or Shabbatonim.



2. Have either of the Perek Yomi or Mishnah Yomit initiatives of USCJ been incorporated into either formal or informal programs?

III. PROGRAMS TO INFLUENCE JEWISH OBSERVANCE OF INDIVIDUALS

1. Describe the program/programs and how they were designed to reach individuals.
2. Indicate either by statistics or narrative what was achieved.
3. Indicate what was learned as you developed and ran the program.

All applications should provide the following information:

PARTICIPATION

How many congregants participate in formal classes?

How many congregants participated in informal programs or in programs?

How many congregants participated in programs aimed at influencing the observance of the individual?

ADMINISTRATION AND PROMOTION

What is the total cost of the program(s)? Please indicate amounts by categories:

- instructional materials
- salaries
- printing
- equipment
- publicity
- etc.
- How much of the budget is covered by registration and/or tuition charges?
- How much is congregational subvention?
- Describe the role and structure of the committee in charge of the program. Include record keeping function.
- How is the program promoted? Are participants outside of the synagogue membership encouraged to participate? Are various media used to draw attention to adult education programs?

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

There are three awards within this category:

1. Program as a whole.
2. One time program
3. Specific on-going element of the program

For any award, early childhood programs must fulfill these criteria:

1. The school shall have been in existence for at least five years, shall run five days weekly, for a minimum of 2.5 hours each day (including total elapsed time, i.e., luncheon, snack time, etc.) have a minimum enrollment of 12 children and appropriate licenses.
2. The school shall be supervised by a licensed principal with a Jewish teachers' institute degree or its equivalent. The equivalent can be a demonstration of ongoing adult Jewish learning through: college level courses in Jewish subjects, completion of Melton, Wexner, Me'ah adult education courses, or an ongoing program of study a synagogue, the BJE or Federation. The majority of teachers shall have a Jewish background and meet the local early childhood school standards.
3. The Early Childhood Director is a part of the senior or executive staff of the synagogue, and attends any and all senior or executive staff meetings. Information about the program including the Director's name and contact information is easily accessible on the synagogue's website.
4. The program of the school shall be approved by the congregation's Rabbi and shall include:
 - a) specific indications of integration of Judaic and general curriculum;
 - b) an environment that delivers the message that "Jewish life happens here" through visual displays, toys, books, and other children's materials;



- c) age-appropriate celebration of all Jewish holidays;
 - d) involvement of all the clergy in the early childhood program and with the early childhood families on a regular basis, with the program as part of the/one rabbi's portfolio.
 - e) observance of *mitzvot* such as correct blessings before meals and snacks, simple *tefillot* and *tzedakah*;
5. The physical facilities shall include furnishings designed for the age range of the classroom and properly equipped outdoor play area.
 6. The school shall maintain all norms of religious observance required by the Conservative Movement as discussed with the synagogue rabbi.
 7. Descriptions of the school's approach to parent and family education and involvement, including specific programs, should be submitted with this application.
 8. While not required, photographic and video materials [on CD or DVD] are recommended as part of the application.

In addition to the above, the following apply for the specific sub-categories:

1. The early childhood program as a whole
 - Schools which have received The Solomon Schechter Award for the early childhood program as a whole in the past must demonstrate growth and improvements in the school since the most recent award.
2. A one time program of the early childhood program (i.e. an imaginary trip to Israel or a tzedakah project)
 - a. Indicate long and short term goals of the program.
 - b. Indicate outcomes and reactions to the program
3. A specific, on-going element of the early childhood program (i.e. an intergenerational program or parent education)
 - a. Indicate long and short term goals of the program
 - b. Indicate outcomes and plans for growth and change of the program

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

The criteria listed below are based on A FRAMEWORK FOR EXCELLENCE FOR THE CONSERVATIVE SYNAGOGUE SCHOOL by the USCJ Department of Education. (Applications are to be endorsed and validated by the Regional Commission on Jewish Education, where there is one.) Congregations are expected to submit data on the following areas of their synagogue school program:

Curriculum

1. United Synagogue Curriculum: The School program and each grade course of study follows an articulated, coherent curriculum the aims of which are consistent with the aims set forth by the **Framework: Aims of the Conservative Synagogue School**. This includes proper supervision, evaluation, and achievement levels.
2. Textbooks, supplemental material and teaching aids are available as needed.

Administration

1. The school board meets regularly and is responsible for setting the school's policies, providing for its needs and establishing an efficient administration. Its budget must be adequate to provide for the educational needs of the school, is prepared at a definite time each year and includes a detailed estimate of all income and expenditures.
2. The school maintains appropriate records and must have a school calendar published at the beginning of the year and available to the board, faculty and parents.

Standards

The synagogue school must either have been recognized as a "Framework for Excellence" school or meet all of the requirements to be so recognized. All required documentation showing same must be provided.



1. Graduation and/or Bar/Bat Mitzvah on Shabbat or holiday morning, must require the satisfactory completion of at least a five-year course of study.
2. Opportunity is provided for individual student differences so as to promote educational growth.

For further information about the Framework or the required documentation, please contact the USCJ Department of Education or email <education@uscj.org>.

FAMILY EDUCATION

Family Education refers to any intergenerational program. It includes pre-parenting programs and grandparenting programs. The thrust and focus of Family Education programs should be to bring families together to learn about and experience Judaism, to empower parents to teach their own children about Judaism, and engage the adult family members in Jewish learning and observance. These programs should be designed to enhance Jewish commitment and communal responsibility within the home and synagogue. Preference will be given to congregations which have met the criteria of Framework for Excellence for the Conservative synagogue school.

1. Include a complete budget of your program(s)
2. To qualify for consideration for an award the congregation must show that the program has been successful for at least two years and that it has had an impact on the people involved. In addition to a description of the overall program a statement of how the program will be expanded and enhanced is to be provided.
3. Include the aims and goals of the program as well as what criteria have been used to ascertain and evaluate the success of the program.
4. Describe the aspects of the program that are formal and informal.
 - a) If formal, describe the hours, faculty, facilities and texts;
 - b) If informal, describe the program(s) e.g., family *kallot*, dinners, trips, workshops or child-centered activities.
5. How is the program promoted and publicized and what recognition is offered to the participants? Who administers and supervises the program? How much time do those who administer and supervise give to family education? Does the congregation have a family educator?
6. Indicate if the program has fostered meetings between the participants outside of the program's structure or led them to publicize this program among their friends to encourage them to join it or similar programs.
7. How does the Family Education program relate to the congregation's overall adult education programs?
8. How was the program evaluated? Will the program be continued? Explain why or why not.

HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION

The high school program is to be geared specifically to the needs of adolescents, and marks a "break" from the elementary religious school. Inter-congregational and regional high schools are also eligible to apply for this award.

1. The school shall offer a program of at least 4 (four) hours of instruction during the days of Sunday through Friday over a two or three day week schedule of attendance.
2. The school shall provide for an integration of its formal educational structure with non-formal programs, such as USY, Camp Ramah, and co-curricular activities generally, so as to effect an educational system that provides for the full educational, social, cultural and leisure needs of its student body.
3. Requirements for completion of the high school course of studies are based on a minimum of three years of study and satisfactory achievement.
4. The school shall be supervised by a qualified educational director with supervisory and administrative experience. The faculty shall be qualified to teach Jewish subject matter. A listing and statement of the qualifications of the director and faculty members must be submitted with the application.
5. A Board of Education or school committee shall meet regularly to develop and implement school educational policy, and represent the lay interests of the community.
6. A curriculum, appropriate to the age level of the students and reflecting the goals and objectives of the school, shall be the basis of the school's educational program.
7. Students attending the school shall have available to them a library with appropriate books of Jewish content, related to their formal studies and corresponding to their age reading level.



SPECIAL EDUCATION

Please see category of **INCLUSION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES** under Administration.

III. FOR ALL AGES

HAZAK

This award, for congregations with chartered Hazak chapters, honors exceptional programs for the senior population. Hazak - the USCJ Organization for Mature Jews - is based on the motto of "Hokhmah - Wisdom, Ziknah - Maturity, and Kadimah - Looking Ahead."

1. When did the group affiliate with Hazak?
2. Describe:
 - a. the chapter's educational opportunities - including speakers, classes, mini-classes, etc.
 - b. the chapter's social opportunities - including in-house events, trips, visits to sites (such as museums) and related activities
 - c. the chapter's religious based opportunities – including Hazak Shabbat or other religious services
3. Is there a paid staff available to help with Hazak programming? Are synagogue funds available and used to help defer costs of mailings and programming expenses?
4. Is there participation by Hazak members in the infrastructure of the congregation by way of:
 - a. representation on the Board and Committees of the congregation?
 - b. participation in volunteer programs of service for the religious school, the youth program, tikun olam or related activities?

KADIMA AND USY

Awards will be given recognizing innovative and creative activities in USY and Kadima programs. Of particular importance will be the evaluation of goals and objectives and how well they have been achieved.

1. Please tell us how many groups you have. How many teens are involved in each one? Please note change in number of members over the past two years.
2. Director and advisors: Does the overall program have a director? State total number of professional advisors or leaders and write up brief profiles indicating their background and experience. Are they members of the Jewish Youth Directors Association? Have they attended in-service programs offered by the International or Regional Youth Departments.
3. How many membership meetings are held each month by each group?
4. Describe the cultural and religious programs (excluding worship services) held during the last two years. Include publicity, scripts, information and evaluations.
5. Does your Synagogue sponsor a Youth (Teenage) congregation? If so, please describe it, including how often it meets and average attendance, How do the teens or pre-teens participate in the service?
6. Do members of USY and Kadima regularly attend services Friday evening, Saturday morning or weekdays?
7. Does the program have a newspaper? How often does it appear and to whom is it distributed? Please include copies of several issues.
8. Does the program have a web site or Facebook group? How often are they updated? How are they managed and monitored?
9. Describe the study program as to courses offered, teachers, texts, etc. If the study is part of the congregation's Hebrew High school program, describe the connection.
10. Describe the programs sponsored by the youth program for and about Israel and World Jewry. Include publicity and results.



11. Describe programs sponsored by the youth program in the area of Social Action/*Tikun Olam* and community service. Include the amount of funds raised for *Tikun Olam* and *Yad B'Yad*.
12. Describe the summer activities of the youth program. How many teens have participated in USY on Wheels, Israel Pilgrimage and Regional Youth Department encampment in 2007 and 2008?
13. Describe the scholarship program which your Synagogue offers for sending young people to *kinnusim*, *kallot*, conventions, Nativ, USY High, and summer programs. Please include the schedule of scholarships (no names) for the last two years.
14. Describe the workings of the adult Youth Committee as to membership, youth representation, meeting schedules and what method the committee uses to supervise the youth program.
15. Include the budgets for the past two program years.

KOACH/COLLEGE STUDENTS

KOACH was created in recognition of the critical need to reach out to our college age student population as they make the transition into young adulthood. Awards will be given to congregations which have designed innovative programs and approaches for maintaining contact with our young people during their college years.

1. Is there a KOACH Liaison Committee in your synagogue? What is the scope of its activities? What professional involvement and support is extended to this committee? Is there a synagogue staff member assigned to the committee?
2. What activities does your congregation offer collegians at nearby college campuses? Describe your greatest successes in terms of (a) the program, (b) publicity, and (c) recruitment of students.
3. What is the involvement of your rabbi and professional staff with the Conservative Jewish population on the local campus? Does your rabbi or other professional staff visit campuses where there are a significant number of collegians from your congregation? Describe the nature of these visits. How often do they occur?
4. What are the most creative, popular programs that your synagogue has designed for its own college students? Have students been responsive? Have the programs been evaluated?
5. What is the budget for collegiate activities within the congregation budget? Please provide details.
6. What is the most creative/successful communication that you have with your collegians?
7. Do you provide financial support for students who attend the KOACH Kallah and other conferences?
8. Do you recognize student accomplishments through the synagogue bulletin or Shabbat service?
9. Has your congregation developed an "aggressive" method of collecting the email addresses of its collegians as close to the beginning of the year as possible? Please describe. Have you shared email addresses with KOACH?
10. Describe any special religious/cultural/educational programs that attract the participation of college students from the community.
11. Does your synagogue offer free High Holiday tickets to collegians at nearby universities? Does it offer free synagogue membership to local collegians? How does it publicize these special services?
12. How does your congregation prepare its high school juniors and seniors for making Jewishly informed choices in their college selection process? How does the rabbi of your congregation acknowledge the life cycle transition of your high school seniors as they prepare themselves for college? Have you used KOACH's "*Lekh-Lekha*" ceremony for graduating high school seniors?
13. Does your congregation offer any scholarship programs to its collegians? Please describe.
14. Does the synagogue and/or rabbi maintain regular contact with collegians via e-mail? How often? What kind of material is sent?
15. Please submit all supporting documentation that will help us in valuating your response to the above.



OUTREACH TO & INTEGRATING YOUNG ADULTS/SINGLES

This award recognizes congregations that have developed programs which successfully reach out to young adults (singles, couples, with or without children.) Although some programming may be directed to young families, this award recognizes those congregations that have developed efforts targeted to the social, religious and educational needs of young couples as couples while integrating them into congregational life.

1. Length of time program has been functioning.
2. Who was your target group? How many people were ultimately involved?
3. Events specifically designed for young adults or singles.
4. Involvement of synagogue staff/volunteers - describe the structure for outreach.
5. Amount of money allocated from synagogue budget.
6. Efforts to integrate young adults or singles into congregation.
7. Detail unique and creative aspects of program.

IV. PROGRAMS

CELEBRATIONS AND DEDICATIONS

There are opportunities in the history of a congregation to celebrate events and milestones, such as a special anniversary (50th, 75th, etc.), a new building or expansion of an existing facility, to honor special members of the community, etc. Awards in this category will be considered for successful and creative programming in this area.

1. Prepare a detailed outline of the planning for this event, including the purpose of the committee, and time line of preparation. Indicate the role of the professional staff in the project, and if any outside professional assistance was utilized.
2. How was the synagogue community involved? Were various age populations involved (i.e. early childhood education, Hebrew School, USY, young adults, Hazak / seniors, etc.)? Was the local Jewish community outside of the synagogue involved? Were special guests invited for the event?
3. Please specify any creative, unusual or unique aspects of the event.
4. How was the event publicized? How were media of all types used? How successful were the publicity efforts?
5. Was there a fund raising component to the event? What were the goals and were they met?
6. Include any relevant materials (programs, videos, press coverage, etc.) along with the application.

HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE AND EDUCATION

In keeping with the fervent commitment "to remember, and never forget" the Holocaust and to learn from its brutal lessons, the synagogue has become a recognized center for Holocaust commemoration observances, study and programming. A comprehensive activities program regarding this subject can serve to strengthen Jewish identity and heighten awareness of contemporary prejudice and the importance of vigorously opposing it.

1. Does the congregation have a committee to plan Holocaust programming and memorial events? How are survivors, children and grandchildren of survivors involved?
2. Describe the unique aspects of your Holocaust commemorations and in what way do they involve the general community? Do the programs transmit information as well as evoke emotion in the audience?
3. Are there any adult courses on the history of the Holocaust? How is this sensitive subject taught in the Religious School?
4. Is there a Holocaust memorial wall or artistic representation in any part of the synagogue? In what way is it unique? Is there a particular story behind it?
5. Are there programs on the arts that relate to the Holocaust? Is there an essay competition? Are awards presented?
6. Does the overall programming convey a supplemental message concerning anti-Semitism, Jewish survival, and/or the overriding need for tolerance in the world?



ISRAEL/MASORTI AFFAIRS

The importance of Israel to Jews everywhere and the historical identification of the Conservative Movement with the Zionist ideal are to be highlighted for this award.

There are two categories in this section.

- A. *Special programming in honor of Israel's 60th anniversary.*
- B. *Other Israel / Masorti programming.*

1. Describe the structure of your congregation's Israel Affairs committee.
2. Describe the Israel Affairs and programs to promote aliyah held since May 2007. These may include a program or programs to foster participation in Mercaz, the Masorti Movement: the Shirley and Jacob Fuchsberg Jerusalem Center, *Kibbutz Hanaton*, *Garin Nitzan*, *Moshav Shorashim*; Jewish National Fund, Israel Bonds and other activities to support Israel. Include supporting documentation available, with descriptions.
3. How has the congregation promoted its members' personal ties with Israel, i.e. promotion of tourism, study, volunteer efforts, sabbatical year in Israel, establishment of a second home in Israel and aliyah? Has the congregation sponsored trips to Israel?
4. Please describe programs designed to enhance Israel - Diaspora relations.
5. In addition to programs sponsored by the congregation for the congregational constituency, please list those programs in which the congregation participated in the larger community, indicating the dimension of participation.
6. Please indicate what special programs were observed for:
 - a. Yom HaZikaron
 - b. *Yom Ha'Atzmaut*
 - c. *Yom Yerushalayim*
 - d. other commemorative dates in terms of Israel promoting membership in Mercaz/USA, Mercaz/Canada and the Masorti movement.
7. Please indicate the role of professionals and laity in developing and implementing programs described.
8. If not covered in the above, please enclose copies of any publications produced by the congregation which related to Israel Affairs and *aliyah*.

Please feel free to add whatever information you feel would be relevant in terms of evaluating the congregation's Israel Affairs program since May 2007.

JUDAICA AND FINE ARTS

In many synagogues today, we find the use of visual arts presentations, as well as sophisticated art programming, enhance the congregation's physical appearance and educate members as to the role of art in Jewish life. Such programs often include periodic displays of Jewish or Israeli art, Sukkah beautification projects, artwork for use in the synagogue created by congregants, a synagogue museum, or rotating art exhibits in a permanent display area for items on loan from other Jewish organizations. The Solomon Schechter Award for Judaica and Fine Arts is awarded for ongoing arts program or programming, not a single piece of art.

1. Describe the ongoing program designed to bring creative visual arts materials to the membership on a regular basis.
2. Is there a congregational Jewish museum open at specific times and accessible to the congregation?
3. Describe any courses on Judaic arts included in the adult education program.
4. Does the congregation have an art committee that coordinates the artwork on display, establishing criteria for art pieces that are accepted as donations, etc.?
5. Does the congregational school have an ongoing program of Jewish art education? Are the children's artworks displayed?



Please explain how the congregation's art program expresses or depicts authentic Jewish concepts, observances, social values, and historical or Biblical events or personalities. Describe the nature and extent of involvement by the membership, and the general community, in the program. Describe how the program has fostered a greater awareness among these groups of the role of art in Jewish life.

PERFORMING ARTS (MUSIC, DRAMA, DANCE)

Performing Arts (music, drama, dance) can enrich and enhance the quality of well-rounded synagogue programming, as well as to introduce members in the community to the variety of aesthetic and spiritual experiences available in a Jewish context - both as active performers and as an audience.

1. Is a synagogue committee assigned oversight of performing arts activities? Does the congregation encourage and support –financially and administratively - the professional staff (Rabbi, Hazzan, Education Director, Youth Director, etc.) to pursue and present projects in the performing arts?
2. In liturgical/worship service settings:
 - a) Are performances of set “art” pieces integrated into the context of the services for variety and diversity?
 - b) Does the synagogue have a choir? Describe its role in services or congregational life. How is balanced maintained between ‘performance’ and ‘participation’?
3. Aside from any professional ensembles, to what extent is the congregation directly involved in the performing arts life of the synagogue? Does the congregation have a volunteer choir, a children’s choir, a drama group, a dance troupe? Are the groups led by volunteers or paid professionals? Are concerts and performances scheduled regularly throughout the year or at special events?
4. Describe how the congregation encourages the arts through presentations. Include descriptions of performing arts series, bringing in outside talent (amateur or professional). Is there a variety of offerings, including vocal, cantorial, instrumental, ensemble, drama or dance? Have seminars, lectures or workshops in Jewish performing arts been offered to the congregational community in adult education series? Is there an endowment fund to defray the costs of such presentations?
5. Has there been planning and presentation of new works -- new music, dramatic scripts, choreography -- perhaps utilizing grants or sponsors to underwrite commissions?
6. Are particular holidays or celebrations (e.g., Jewish Music Month) adequately highlighted by special performances in the congregational community?
7. How have the performing arts been integrated in the curriculum of the congregational school and/or the synagogues youth program (USY)?
8. Are there specific classes offered, utilizing various media now available (audio, visual, CD-ROM, etc.), and have performances been part of the celebratory or commemorative (e.g. graduation, *Yom HaShoah*, etc.) events?
9. Have the various arms of the congregation worked together to present programs of a larger scope?
10. Describe how the synagogue used available media (internet, TV - cable and public access, radio, print, etc.) to publicize and then to share performance with the community at large?

Senior Citizens: see Hazak

SOCIAL ACTION – PUBLIC POLICY

"Social Action" refers to the hands-on involvement of the synagogue in social justice issues Jewish and secular - on the local, state and/or national and international level. Often, programming in the area of social action involves cooperation and/or coalition with other community groups, Jewish and non-Jewish, which share our concerns.

The Solomon Schechter Social Action Award-Public Policy gives recognition to the synagogues within the Conservative Movement which have organized hands-on projects in response to a need created by social injustice or a natural or human crisis. In assessing a synagogue's accomplishments and achievements, the Committee will consider responses to the following



inquiries:

1. Describe the congregation's Social Action (-Public Policy) Committee. Include information about its structure, the manner of selection of its members, the manner of selection of its cs, its pattern of meetings, the nature of its accountability, and the precise manner in which it is managed.
2. State and describe in detail the response of the congregation to social action and public policy issues and concerns affecting the community -- local, state, national or international -- since May 2007.
3. State and describe in detail those projects in which the Committee joined with other community groups.
4. State and describe in detail the manner in which this Committee involved the synagogue as a whole in its programming. What other organization and/or Committees within the synagogue, i.e. Men's Club, Sisterhood, etc., were involved in the activities and programming of the Committee?
5. How did the Committee utilize the skills of synagogue professionals, i.e. the Rabbi, Cantor, teachers, etc., within its programming?
6. Was the synagogue's approach and/or handling of a specific issue or problem unique in relation to the approach of other organizations within the general community?
7. How do you assess the impact and results of the synagogue's actions on various issues and/or problems upon the synagogue in particular and the community in general?
8. State and describe in detail the response, evaluation and/or feedback, if any, received from the community as a result of the Committee's activities and programming.

V. WORSHIP AND RITUAL

The criteria listed below are to serve as guidelines for evaluating unique or innovative approaches to Worship and Ritual. They in no way constitute endorsement of any specific halachic approach.

Worship:

1. Creative and significant ways in which beliefs, values, and tradition are highlighted through ritual with regard to: God, God and Humanity, Torah, The Jewish People, Israel
2. Creative handling of special ceremonies and worship occasions, including:
National Crisis, Israel emergencies, Significant American holidays, Secular commemorations, Personal crisis
3. The use of design, furnishings, etc. to enhance the prayer atmosphere.
4. Special translations and/or adaptations of prayers which serve to enhance and enrich the prayer function, including meaningful presentation of prayers, and preparation of original prayers, and/or the utilization of the Siddur.
5. Original efforts to stimulate involvement in the following areas:
 - a) "Kavanah"
 - b) Regularity of the worship experience
 - c) Use of Hazzanut and music
 - d) Private and personal meditation
6. Encouragement of prayer at home for individuals and the family.
7. Training for lay involvement as service leaders.
8. Is the congregation a participatory "singing" congregation? How are new melodies introduced? How is balance maintained between new and familiar melodies?
9. Innovative efforts in the following areas:
 - a) Daily minyanim
 - b) Shabbat
 - c) High Holidays
 - d) Fast days
 - e) The other holidays

Ritual:

1. "The Life Cycle" and provision for meaningful experiences:



- a) Ceremonies attending birth
Ceremonies relevant to child development including education, Bar/Bat Mitzvah, commemorating advancement of education
- c) Preparations for married life and wedding service
- d) Funerals, death and mourning

The following questions can also be addressed:

2. To what degree and frequency are congregants, either as individuals or through committees, involved in the planning of and participation in worship and ritual experiences?
3. What are the congregation's goals for achieving optimal worship experiences and to what degree are laymen trained and involved in these decisions?
4. What measures were used to maintain continuity, particularly during the past two years, for expressions of worship and ritual?
5. Describe how worship and ritual experiences include all members of the congregation.(including younger children through senior citizens. What is the role of the various organizational arms of the congregation including the Sisterhood, Men's Club, USY, and graduates of summer programs including Camp Ramah and various pilgrimage groups?

VI. AWARD FOR SMALL CONGREGATIONS

(Under 100 families)

Recognizing that smaller congregations face unique challenges because of their size, gold and silver awards will be presented for creative strategies and proven results in any of the following areas:

- Attracting and retaining professional leadership
- Promoting membership growth
- Dealing with volunteer burnout
- Fund raising in a limited setting
- Running an effective small school/youth program

Please feel free to consult the criteria in the relevant categories elsewhere in this book as they pertain to your individual situation.

