LET'S BUILD A CULTURE OF BELONGING

We All Yearn for Connection and a Sense That We Matter…

A Culture of Belonging ensures everyone in a group or organization feels seen, valued, and part of something bigger. It helps us build strong, inclusive communities, support each other through hard times, find meaning in our rich Jewish traditions, and create a better future.

Belonging for a few happens by chance; belonging for many requires intentional design and new habits and norms embedded in the DNA of organizations and groups at every level, from board to staff to volunteers to members to those who feel "outside." The Jewish Community Federation and Endowment Fund's Culture of Belonging framework is based on

the teaching and inspiration of Dr. Sara Shadmi-Wortman, Co-Founder and CEO of the Varda Institute for Community Building, and Federation board member Varda Rabin. It offers a methodology, language, principles, and step-by-step guidance to drive this change.

Culture change is a process that requires active assessment, design, and iteration. This digital toolkit is one resource to support that work, with hands-on strategies to start your journey or ideas for strengthening belonging and community in your organization.

JCF JEWISH COMMUNITY FEDERATION & ENDOWMENT FUND

in partnership with

VARDA Institute for Community Building

10 Principles for a Culture of Belonging

1. **Start with belonging as a goal.** Design anything from meetings and events to job descriptions with the intention to increase belonging, connection, and trust.

2. **Build structured practices** into group activities. Don't rely on random chance or a friendly person to ensure that everyone feels included. Instead agree on group practices that define how we meet, celebrate, and take care of each other.

3. **Establish rituals** that build confidence and group identity through repeated, shared customs.

4. **Define common purpose** so each person plays a role in shaping and sustaining the group's larger mission.

5. **Prioritize face-to-face interaction.** Meeting in person enables multi-dimensional connection that can't be replicated through technology.

6. **Create fixed small groups** that gather regularly and help individuals connect to each other and the larger organization on a deeper level.

7. **Encourage multi-dimensional sharing and doing.** Structure activities for people to get to know each other on multiple levels and experience different aspects of life together.

8. **Focus on assets over needs.** Ask "what does each person have to offer?" and give each a role to play, based on their unique talents, identities, and contributions.

9. **Shift from delivering services to inviting ownership** by treating people as partners rather than customers.

10. **Cultivate group identity and pride.** Explore ways to express the group's uniqueness. By creating a sense of pride and celebrating milestones.