

“Starting a Men’s Club” FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What does a Men’s Club do? Men’s Clubs run a variety of activities that depend pretty much on the needs and interests of its members and the congregation. Most Men’s Clubs, however, run programs to enhance Jewish observance in the synagogue and at home. Most also run one or more community service or congregational service projects. Where there are a significant number of younger members, Men’s Clubs tend to have father-child activities and sports and recreational programs. Most Men’s Clubs also have some sort of fund-raising activity. Many Men’s Clubs offer Sunday morning speaker breakfasts, although more and more, clubs are opting in favor of participatory activities. And, finally, many clubs supplement their own programs by participating in regional activities.

Does a Men’s Club need to be affiliated with a synagogue? No. In fact, the FJMC does have a couple of affiliated clubs that aren’t affiliated with a specific congregation. They are simply groups of men who enjoy getting together for activities. In some instances, the men might not actually be members of a congregation, or the synagogue to which they belong doesn’t have a Men’s Club.

Do members of a Men’s Club need to be Jewish? No. In fact, many Men’s Clubs have it written in their bylaws that non-Jewish supportive spouses of Jewish men can join the club. At the 2021 Convention, the FJMC’s Bylaws were changed to open affiliation to clubs and individuals beyond just Conservative Judaism. As an organization, the FJMC subscribes to the observances of the Conservative Masorti Movement and welcomes individuals and other Jewish clubs to participate in its activities as members.

How can I start a Men’s Club? Your first step is to discuss the formation of a Men’s Club with your congregation’s lay and religious leadership. Find out what they’d like to see the club do and find out any steps that they might want you to follow. Next, you need to meet with a few other men to brainstorm on what you want your potential club to do. If you’re unsure what the possibilities are, you should contact the FJMC’s Office at international@fjmc.org, and you will be put in touch with one or more of our international officers who can give you some ideas. After your small steering committee has discussed matters, you need to have an organizational activity to enlist members. For more detailed information on how to proceed, download the brochure “A Guide to Forming a Men’s Club.”

How do we structure a Men’s Club? At its very basic, a Men’s Club needs officers and some kind of dues system. You will ultimately need to adopt a constitution or bylaws, and the FJMC has a couple of examples that you might want to use. To start with, you will need a president and a treasurer. Depending on the size and complexity of your club, you may want to add other officers, including several vice presidents. Many clubs identify their vice presidents for different responsibilities – programming, community service, religious, membership, and fund raising. In addition to your officers, you might want some additional men to serve on a Men’s Club Board of Directors. And you’ll need regular business meetings. Some clubs have Board meetings every other month, with an officers’ meeting in the off-month – but you should set it up as needed for your organization.

How do we know what our members want? You’re already ahead of the game by asking this question. Many clubs simply plan programs without fully understanding the interests of their members. You may have to feel your way through this one. If you are just starting up, you should plan a couple of activities that the participants on your steering committee would like to attend. Once you start having programs, you should have short preference surveys for the attendees to complete. Later, you might want to do some random telephone surveying. And you might conduct a written survey of congregational leaders, who usually have a pretty good insight on what congregants want. For specific information on the types of questions to ask, the FJMC has prepared some sample membership surveys that you might want to download.

How much dues should we charge? It largely depends on how active your club will be, how much (if anything) you will charge individuals to attend your functions, and how much (if anything) you will want to contribute to the congregation each year. And don’t forget that you should have some money left over at the end of your program year

to get things started the following year. Also remember that not all of your expenses will be for specific programs. For instance, you might want to give youth scholarships for a Jewish oriented camp or subsidize attendance for your officers to attend FJMC or regional conventions or retreats or to purchase stationery or other materials. Many Men's Clubs these days that are affiliated with the FJMC charge dues of about \$36, but keep in mind that this includes per-capita dues to the FJMC of \$11. It might be helpful to establish a written budget. The FJMC has created a sample budget that you might want to use, but keep in mind that each Men's Club has budget categories unique to its own situation.

What are the Benefits of Affiliating with the FJMC? The FJMC has a 90+ year history of helping its clubs and regions build stronger clubs, regions and Jewish men and leaders. It implemented the Regional structure (there currently are 14 regions in North America) to allow closer cooperation of clubs in areas. Today, many of those regions have **Biennial Retreats** (open to all men in the region), **Men of the Year** programs to allow each club to honor the usually unrecognized members who help make their clubs a success, **leadership development** gatherings, where club leaders are trained to become better leaders (and help their clubs become better clubs), and networking sessions, bringing leaders together so that they can share program and other ideas which help make their clubs successful.

On an international level, the FJMC:

- Holds a **Biennial Convention** that allows men and club leaders to network with other men in a ruach-filled environment, where each of us can learn important leadership and life skills from one another. Most regions help subsidize attendance at the Convention.
- Holds a **Leadership Development Institute (LDI)** weekend for regional leadership and emerging regional leadership learning skills to help make them better leaders and men. For years, leadership development training, even at the international executive committee level, has been an important part of our meetings.
- **Mentors** - leaders at the club, region and international level, often sending international leaders and trainers to regional events throughout the year. A number of our short, FJMC Ted Talks are available for viewing on our website.
- Innovative club developed award winning programs are shared with other clubs, and many of FJMC's signature programs were originally club developed;
- Develops innovative programming that better connects people of all ages to the Jewish community, such as the "Imagine Life Initiative" to help our families and congregants deal with mental health and substance abuse issues which too often confront us; working to have all members of our community, whether LBGQT, Jews of color, single parents, physically or mentally challenged, etc., to know that they are welcome and important parts of our community; and helping us work with international Jewish communities which need help, such as the Abayudaya Jewish community in east Africa / Uganda.