ORTHODOX UNION

One OU

A Three-Year Strategic Implementation Plan

REVISED DRAFT

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MISSION. VISION. VALUES. PRIORITIES. IMPLEMENTATION.

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Part 1: Framework

Mission

The OU's mission is to build a growing, religiously vibrant, and caring Jewish community by harnessing the Orthodox community's Torah values, resources, talent, and networks to move communal solutions forward.[1] A growing, religiously vibrant and caring community is one whose members of all ages are proudly defined and identified by their faith in G-d and goodness to others and by their Torah values, study and observance.

As America's leading association of Orthodox synagogues, the Orthodox Union is uniquely positioned to use the power of the Klal to strengthen Orthodoxy, address pressing communal needs, and represent Torah values within the Jewish community and in the broader spheres of Jewish, American, Israeli, and civic life.

The OU accomplishes its mission by developing, nurturing, and scaling programs and efforts that elevate the religious experience of Jews, support Jewish communities and their members, advocate for their needs, and bring Torah values into public life.

OU Kosher provides a bedrock service to the worldwide Jewish community and remains a key source of organizational capacity and flexibility. The work of OU Kosher directly and materially furthers the OU's mission. However, this document does not serve as the strategic operating plan for OU Kosher.

Vision

More Jews growing closer to Hashem through Torah and Mitzvos

Guided by this vision, the OU's strategy will focus on deepening Jewish engagement, strengthening communities, and building sustainable pathways for individual and communal growth. The vision statement is intentionally concise; each word points to an operating choice for the organization.

Interpreting the Vision

More

More is not only a communications goal or a count of impressions. It means expanding the number of Jews the OU reaches while also deepening the quality of that engagement. Within 10 years, by FY37, the OU

[1] *Our mission furthers the purposes of the organization set forth in Article II of the OU's Constitution.*

will document annual engagement of more than 2 million unique Jews through programs, services, content, and partnerships (excluding Kashrus). As measurement improves, the 2 million figure should be treated as a reach target and not automatically as an impact metric. Deeper impact will be tracked for smaller, more intensively engaged cohorts through repeat engagement, relationship touchpoints, contact hours, practice change, leadership development, and program-specific outcomes.

FY27 work will establish clearer baselines. Goal # 6 below emphasizes our need to better develop and use data. Once the OU measures current reach and depth more accurately, leadership can determine whether 2 million is appropriate for reach and what smaller, credible target should define deeper impact.

Jews

Jews means Klal Yisrael. The OU's core competence and primary responsibility remain rooted in Orthodox Judaism and Orthodox communal life, but the vision is not limited to Orthodox Jews. It reflects an imperative to present Orthodox Judaism - Torah, mitzvos, meaning, community, and spiritual aspiration - as a life-giving path that can inspire and engage Jews across backgrounds, including non-Orthodox, lapsed, unaffiliated, searching, and newly curious Jews.

Growing

Growing means thriving, not merely surviving. The OU must continue to respond to anti-Semitism and communal threats, but this vision is not simply defensive, nor is it only a conventional Jewish continuity agenda. Growth means more Jews discovering meaning, pride, commitment, family, community, learning, mitzvah observance, chesed, and belonging. It means building confidence in Torah Judaism rather than defining Jewish life primarily by crisis or loss.

Closer to Hashem

Every OU priority, program, message, partnership, and strategic choice must be tested against whether it helps move people closer to Hashem and never away from Him. This requires Kiddush Hashem in both public leadership and daily conduct, avoiding Chilul Hashem, and creating pathways that enable curiosity, warmth, and aspiration rather than communicating only judgment, exclusion, or a list of no's.

Through Torah and Mitzvos

Through Torah and Mitzvos is the operating motto of this plan. It builds from the OU's historic dedication to raising the kashrus standards and broadens the same idea: Torah is not only an identity marker but a lived path of behavior, learning, practice, and responsibility. The OU's work should help Jews translate belief and belonging into concrete mitzvah life.

The Four B Framework

A useful lens for this vision is the Four B Framework: **Belief, Behavior, Belonging, and Becoming:**

Belief deepens connection by cultivating Emunah, a lived faith in Hashem, Torah, and the Jewish mission, and Bitachon, the confidence that Jewish life is guided by Divine purpose and can be embraced with trust and courage.

Behavior translates those commitments into action through mitzvah observance, Torah learning, chesed, ethical responsibility, and active participation in communal life.

Belonging creates trusted entry points into Jewish life by helping Jews feel connected to one another, valued within, supported and supporting community, and responsible for the Jewish people.

Becoming describes the lifelong process of growing into a more committed, proud, resilient, and spiritually alive Jew. In this way, Pro-Semitism is strengthened not only by helping Jews defend Judaism, but by helping them experience Judaism as meaningful, trustworthy, and compelling enough to grow into.

Torah Values

The OU represents a value system, and by extension the constituency and broader Jewish community that identify with those values. The OU's core values are grounded in the belief in Torah and mitzvos as the eternal word of G-d given at Sinai. They are expressed as follows:

שְׁאַל אָבִיךָ וְיַגֶּדְךָ זְקֵנֶיךָ וְיֹאמְרוּ לָךְ

A commitment to the perpetuation of the mesorah, the Halachic tradition, within each communal segment as informed by recognized Halachic authorities.

כִּי הֵם חַיֵּינוּ וְאֹרֶךְ יָמֵינוּ וּבָהֶם נֶהְגֶּה יוֹמָם וָלָיְלָה

A commitment to the centrality of Torah study in the life of all Jewish men and women, in accordance with their respective religious needs, aspirations, and obligations.

יָפֶה תַלְמוּד תּוֹרָה עִם דֶּרֶךְ אֶרֶץ

A commitment to educate and raise our children to be knowledgeable in and committed to Torah values, economically self-sufficient, and able to contribute meaningfully to society through civic engagement.

כֹּה תֹאמַר לְבֵית יַעֲקֹב וְתַגֵּיד לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

A commitment to the religious engagement of women.

תּוֹרָה צִוָּה־לָנוּ מֹשֶׁה מוֹרָשָׁה קְהִלַּת יַעֲקֹב

A commitment to the critical role of strong local kehillot and the value of effective communal infrastructure.

כל ישראל ערבים זה לזה

A commitment to acting upon our individual and communal responsibility to ensure the spiritual and material well-being of every Jew.

כָּל אַלְמָנָה וְיָתוֹם לֹא תְעַנּוּן

A commitment to create caring communities, with particular sensitivity to the religious, emotional, and social needs of those lacking an adequate support system.

עַבְדִי אָתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר בְּךָ אֶתְפָּאָר

A commitment to consistently embody Torah values such as integrity, humility, and respect, and to serve as relatable role models to the broader Jewish community and beyond.

ובהר ציון תהיה פליטה והיה קדש

A commitment to the physical safety, religious identity, and spiritual strength of the State of Israel.

ודרשו את שלום העיר אשר הגליתי אתכם שמה

A commitment to advance the well-being of the country in which we reside and the world around us by contributing to society materially and spiritually, and by bringing Torah values into the public square in ways that address the challenges of contemporary life.

Brief Organizational History and Synagogue Membership

The OU was founded in 1898 as the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, reflecting its core commitment to the local synagogue as a cornerstone of Jewish involvement. The OU remains an association of synagogues and congregations and will be kept in compliance with its Constitution and with relevant laws and federal guidelines regarding such organizations.

The OU's synagogue membership reflects its founding commitment to strengthening Orthodox congregational life by supporting synagogues, rabbis, professionals, and lay leaders. Membership is an affiliation of shared values and support rather than a certification, inspection, or supervisory relationship. OU member synagogues formally identify with the OU's values and standards, offer moral and financial support, and may receive programs and services, while many OU services remain available to non-member Orthodox synagogues as well.

The OU does not monitor, inspect, certify, or enforce member congregations' compliance with legal or safety standards. It expects affiliated synagogues to uphold the OU's Torah Values conscientiously and reserves the right to deny or revoke membership where necessary to preserve the integrity of the association.

Strategic Planning Process

This plan reflects a planning process of unusual breadth. To the best of current organizational memory, it is the first comprehensive integrated strategic implementation plan of this kind. It is designed to create shared

direction while preserving the strength and distinctive expertise of the OU's programs and departments. Key to the plan and the implementation of the vision is the introduction of "One OU," described below.

- The effort produced an integrated strategic framework and multi-year plans for 17 programmatic and operational departments.
- This integration document began with individual plans and departmental analysis, before moving into top-down synthesis and executive review.

The public-facing implication is simple: this plan is not a collection of disconnected departmental updates. It is a coordinated roadmap for how the OU will align mission, people, resources, relationships, and infrastructure over the next three years.

Strategic Priorities

The OU's work begins with strengthening Orthodox Judaism and Orthodox Jewish communities, but its reach and responsibility extend beyond any single geography or demographic category. The OU's focus on North America has therefore been broadened to account for the OU's growing Israel focus, the worldwide impact of OU Kosher, and work that reaches Jews outside North America.

While all ongoing programs and engagement that grow connection to Hashem through Torah and mitzvos remain core to our mission, the OU will concentrate available energy, effort, and discretionary resources over the next three years on work that best reflects and advances the following three priorities.

1. Jewish Pride and Pro-Semitism

Torah Judaism as a source of identity, meaning, confidence, and becoming

The OU will expand its reach by bringing more Torah to more Jews in accessible, compelling, and credible ways. This priority is not only a response to anti-Semitism. It is a proactive effort to help Jews experience Judaism as a source of pride, meaning, moral confidence, spiritual aspiration, and daily practice.

The priority turns the vision outward: Orthodox Judaism should be communicated as compelling, meaningful, and spiritually aspirational, with enough credibility and warmth to invite Jews across backgrounds into deeper curiosity and growth.

Some examples include: Ohrbit, JSU, 18forty

2. The Anglo Israel Experience

Supporting greater religious and spiritual vibrancy in English-speaking communities in Israel

The OU will invest in understanding, supporting, and strengthening the religious engagement of English-speaking communities in Israel. These communities play a unique role in the Jewish ecosystem, serving as bridges between Israel and the Diaspora and as centers of Torah growth for families, students, gap-year participants, young professionals, and olim.

Our emphasis is on greater religious vibrancy. The work should remain disciplined about scope, mission alignment, and the OU's distinctive ability to add value.

Some examples include: JLIC in Israel, Yachad Israel, Anglo Engagement department including NCSY

3. Community and Belonging

Growing community across ages, stages, geographies, and needs

At its core, the OU is in the business of building Jewish community. Much of its impact comes from creating spaces where people feel they belong, alongside growth in belief, behavior, and becoming. The priority is to build communities that are growing, caring, and religiously vibrant - not merely programmatically busy.

A central part of this priority is ensuring that the OU continues to serve people whose needs are often unseen or underserved, while strengthening the communal infrastructure that helps individuals and families find durable connection to Torah life.

Some examples include: Yachad programing, JLIC couples on campus, Women chaburot programming

Cross-Cutting Capability: External Relations and Public Leadership

External relations is a core function through which the OU advances every priority and the vision itself. External messaging, public leadership, government relations, communal partnerships, donor engagement, advocacy, and chizuk all help the OU engage the public in Torah values and ideas.

The OU's relationships - with rabbanim, shuls, schools, communal leaders, donors, funders, civic partners, content partners, organizational allies, volunteers, alumni, emerging leaders, trusted messengers, government representatives, and agencies - are not merely departmental assets. They are part of the shared infrastructure through which the OU advances Torah values, strengthens community, moves communal solutions forward, and brings chizuk to Klal Yisrael.

This includes government and agency relationships in the United States and Israel, including work advanced through OU Advocacy, Teach Coalition, OU Israel, and senior leadership in Israel and North America. One OU strengthens this capability by creating shared visibility, language, stewardship, and coordination, but external relations itself is a strategic mechanism for the OU's mission, priorities, and public responsibility.

Operationalizing the OU Vision: One OU

A. Theory of Change

The One OU concept begins with a simple theory of change—a “flywheel” that translates our vision into communal impact.



At the very center of this model is Hashem. Not as a symbol or an inspiration, but as the true axis around which everything turns. Our purpose, our decisions, and our ambitions are grounded in His Will. When Hashem is centered, responsibility is no longer self-referential, it becomes Avodat HaKodesh, sacred stewardship.



Hashem motivates us and demands that we act with Responsibility (Achrayut). Responsibility here means that individuals and institutions see themselves as caretakers of one another and of the community as a whole. We do not wait for someone else to act. We take ownership—of people, outcomes, resources, and impact—because we understand that we are accountable not only to each other, but to Hashem.

That sense of Responsibility naturally gives rise to Community. When people act with Achrayut, trust deepens. Relationships strengthen. Individuals feel seen, supported, and needed. Community becomes not just a gathering of people, but a shared covenant—where everyone has a role and everyone belongs. This is where the community begins to grow: in numbers, in engagement, and in shared purpose.

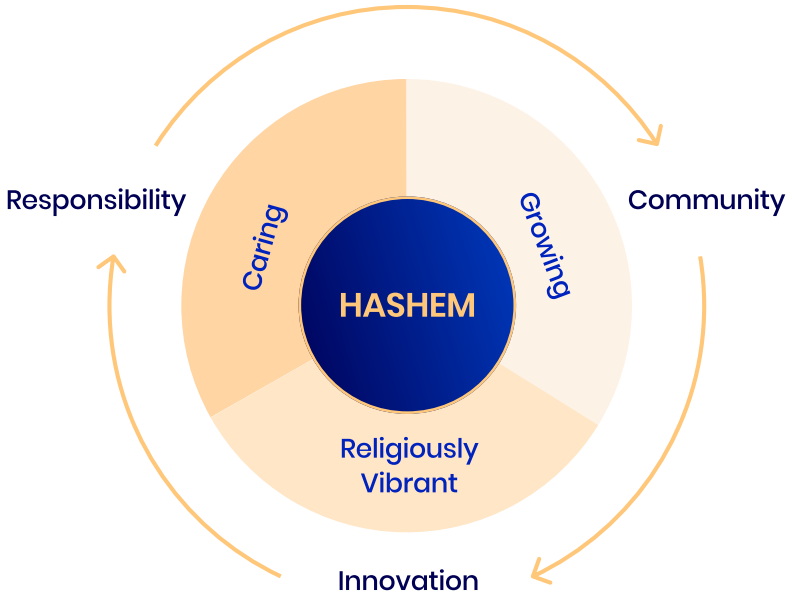
As Responsibility and Community reinforce one another, they create the conditions for Innovation. Innovation in this model is not disruption for its own sake, but thoughtful, values-driven problem-solving. When people care deeply and feel responsible, they ask better questions: How can we serve more effectively? Who is being left out? How do we deepen spiritual life while meeting real human needs? Innovation emerges as a communal response to real challenges, guided by Torah values and grounded in compassion.

As these outcomes take hold, they reinforce Responsibility once again. Success increases our sense of obligation rather than diminishing it. We become more accountable—not out of fear, but out of love and reverence. Accountability here is responsible accountability: measuring impact, learning honestly, and adjusting course, all in service of Hashem.

That innovation, when aligned with Hashem's Will, leads to solutions that strengthen the three inner outcomes of the community:

- A Growing community—reaching more people, expanding access and rejecting religious complacency.
- A Caring community—where chesed, dignity, and mutual responsibility are lived realities.

- A Religiously Vibrant community—where Torah, mitzvos, and spiritual meaning are alive and compelling and a source of joy and fulfillment.



B. OU as an Engine for Communal Solutions

Due to the localized, temporal, or self-contained nature of networks and communities, the flywheel requires a broader framework to turn at scale. Historically, the OU has served as this broader framework for energizing and scaling communal solutions. OU Kosher, NCSY, Yachad, JLIC, All Torah, and the Teach Network all started as innovative responses to communal challenges that could not be addressed through local responses alone. They may have started as local responses, such as with the shul-based regional networks of youth groups that birthed NCSY, but they were only able to reach maturity and scale due to the resources, networks, and scope of a national organization like the OU.

The imprint of the modern OU can be found at all stages of the flywheel:

Achrayut/Responsibility – Achrayut is a sense of responsibility for all of Klal Yisrael—not only for people "like us," and not only for those we already serve. It includes responsibility for outcomes and for the infrastructure that enables outcomes. In practice, achrayut means looking beyond our immediate constituencies to those who are isolated or underserved, stewarding resources transparently, and developing leaders who take responsibility for others. Examples across the OU include NCSY's investment in teen leadership and advisor pipelines, JLIC's mentorship and leadership development for emerging adults, OU Advocacy's mobilization of lay leaders and coalition partners on behalf of the community, and the Teach Network's coordination of day schools and their donors and constituencies to make day school more affordable.

Community – Community is where responsibility becomes relational. We build communities of belonging by creating consistent touchpoints, trusted relationships, and pathways into Jewish life—through synagogues and schools, youth movements, campus professionals, Israel programming, and inclusive communities like Yachad. For example, OU Israel Youth Centers use a multi-year model that emphasizes

belonging and meaning for teens in the periphery; Yachad builds a community where individuals with disabilities—and the broader community around them—experience belonging; and JLIC educators create a "home away from home" for students and young professionals during key life transitions. Through the strategic planning process, Communal Engagement has shifted its strategy to more directly focus on reinforcing and strengthening the key elements of healthy, vibrant communities, rather than simply developing isolated programs.

Innovation – Innovation is the disciplined effort to test, learn, and scale what works—while staying anchored to Torah values. It means designing new models for real needs, not novelty, learning quickly, and sharing what we learn so that best practices travel. Examples include piloting scalable engagement models, such as the Anglo Department's Innovation Hub in Israel; developing digital and hybrid pathways to reach underserved audiences, for example NCSY's JSU Global Campus and other emerging online models; and strengthening the systems—technology, training, and data—that allow programs to improve over time. Communal Engagement is now transforming itself into a pipeline that moves innovative ideas through the development phase until they reach a communal tipping point and mature into lasting, scaled solutions.

The OU models, nurtures, develops, and reinforces responsibility, community, and innovation through the myriad of its programs, networks, and initiatives—so that responsibility becomes collective, community becomes increasingly resilient, innovation becomes scalable, and the Orthodox community grows with purpose. In this way, the OU does not merely participate in the flywheel; it helps power it, enabling the Orthodox community to transform shared values into sustained, meaningful impact.

C. One OU as the Operating System for the OU Engine

Each of the OU's legacy programs was created to address specific communal needs and solutions. They developed over time through ingenuity, drive, and focus. The focused leadership of efforts such as NCSY, OU Kosher, JLIC, Teach, and Yachad was a critical ingredient in each program achieving success and impact in its specific lane. With each program's success, new talent pipelines, networks, and resources were developed with relevance not just to each program, but to the OU and the Jewish community as a whole. In order for the OU to reach its full potential as an engine for communal solutions, it needs to be supported by an effort that maximizes all of its assets and resources. This concept is what we call "One OU." This does not call for uniformity or blurring the uniqueness of each program. The OU's success has depended on the visionary focus and leadership of all of its distinct programs and efforts. It means, though, creating a shared foundation that enables each program to succeed in its own way while increasing the OU's overall impact through shared resources, networks, systems, and stronger connections across programs, making the OU's impact greater than the sum of its parts.

We already see One OU in action across the organization; the goal of this plan is to make it the default. One OU becomes real when we excel at the Three Cs—Communication, Coordination, and Collaboration—and when we treat our people, relationships, systems, and data as shared enterprise capabilities aligned in service of Hashem and the needs of Klal Yisrael.

At the level of Responsibility (Achrayut), One OU creates shared ownership not only of outcomes, but of the enterprise capabilities that make those outcomes possible. Talent development is approached as an OU-wide pipeline while still preparing people for specialized programmatic roles. Relationships are cultivated

not only for individual departments, but for the broader OU. Systems and data are designed for learning and accountability — not just reporting. In this way, shared capacity and data strengthen each program's effectiveness rather than competing with it.

At the level of Community, One OU allows people, knowledge, and relationships to flow across boundaries in ways that deepen impact. Internal teams collaborate across functions; external partners —synagogues, schools, rabbis, lay leaders, funders, and civic partners — experience clearer communication and more coordinated support. Shared frameworks and shared tools, such as common CRM and reporting approaches, create consistency where it adds value while still honoring local context, program-specific needs, and the trusted relationships that make each area of work effective.

At the level of Innovation, shared infrastructure makes innovation more possible, more scalable, and more responsible. Promising ideas often emerge at the intersection of talented people, broad networks, reliable systems, and insight-rich data. One OU helps ensure that innovations are informed by real needs, tested thoughtfully, evaluated rigorously, and then shared across the organization — so that best practices do not remain trapped in one program and breakthroughs in one area can strengthen others.

Critically, One OU ensures that innovation leads to responsible accountability. Shared definitions and common data allow the OU to measure impact consistently, learn honestly, and improve continuously. This includes setting clear baselines, reducing double counting, and tracking both reach and depth. Accountability becomes an act of integrity rather than control — ensuring that growing, caring, and religious vitality remain balanced and aligned with Hashem's Will.

Most importantly, One OU keeps Hashem at the center. When people and teams are aligned around a shared mission while empowered to fulfill their distinct roles, priorities become clearer and tradeoffs more principled. Unity within the OU reinforces the message that all of this work — structure, scale, strategy, and programmatic excellence—is in service of Avodat Hashem and the spiritual and material flourishing of the Jewish people.