

Jewish Community Foundation of San Diego

Impact Investing Journey Overview

The [Jewish Community Foundation of San Diego \(JCFSF\)](#) collaborates with individuals and organizations, and leverages philanthropic capital, to advance sustainable, just and vibrant societies and to build flourishing Jewish communities in San Diego, Israel, across the country and around the globe. The foundation has been a philanthropic leader in the San Diego area and nationally, facilitating over \$1.7 Billion in grants since 1967, with more than \$650 million in assets under management. JCFSF is built on [Jewish values](#), that include *tzedakah* (justice, ethical responsibilities) and *dor l'dor* (passing on values from generation to generation).

JCFSF manages [donor-advised funds \(DAFs\)](#) and endowments for over 900 individuals and families, of all backgrounds, as well as endowments and custodial funds for over 80 organizations, half of which are secular nonprofits. Donors can open a DAF with a donation (\$1,800 minimum), from which they can grant to nonprofits of their choice at any time.

The foundation is committed to aligning their investment strategies with Jewish values. In August 2017, JCFSF became the first Jewish community foundation to offer a risk-adjusted market-rate, diversified impact investment option to all

AT A GLANCE

Denomination: Jewish

Location: San Diego, CA

Year of First Impact Investment: 2017

Impact Sector Focus:

- Affordable Housing
- Sustainable Jobs
- Israel

Geographic Impact Focus: California, Israel, Global

Impact Investing Lead: Beth Sirull, President and CEO

Website: www.jcfsandiego.org/resources/impact-investments/

donors. The JCF Impact Investment Pool applies a Jewish lens across all asset classes with custom screens and shareholder advocacy on public securities, an allocation to Israeli securities, and 20% in private debt and equity focused on creating environmental and social impact. Over the past three years, JCF's Impact Investment Pool has been among its highest performing investment options.

In addition, JCFSF empowers donors to make donor-advised investments directly in private community development funds in San Diego to support affordable housing, a healthy local economy, and the environment. These local investments have included the Habitat for Humanity Homebuilding Investment Fund, Mission Driven Finance's Advance Economic Development Loan Fund, and the Women's Empowerment Fund.

"It is commanded to Jewish people to do justice. With this simple act of impact investing, we are pursuing justice. And, by standing up and sharing this act with other agencies across our region, we are furthering this pursuit as others follow our lead."

- Beth Sirull, President and CEO

Key Steps Taken and Barriers Overcome Along the Impact Investing Journey

While there can be a disconnect between values and investing decisions in the Jewish community, Beth offers that ["faith-based investing means not checking your spiritual values at the synagogue/church door."](#) JCFSF has sought to lead by example, drawing upon Jewish teachings and practices that extend these values to our economic lives.

JCFSF has built a mission-aligned leadership team across senior management and the board to implement their impact investing strategy. The board approved the establishment of the Impact Investment Pool in 2017 and created a subcommittee to review impact investing opportunities. With a recent unrestricted bequest to the foundation, JCFSF allocated its first \$1 million to impact-first investments in San Diego and Israel. Currently, the foundation is in the process of transitioning its traditional Long Term Pool (100% liquid) to an ESG Pool. When that transition is completed, approximately 10% of the foundation's assets will be in values-aligned investments.

Successes and New Frontiers

As the first Jewish community foundation in North America to offer a diversified impact investment option to all donor advisors, JCFSD aims to “blaze a trail” for others in the Jewish community and beyond. They seek to model impact investing in a way that is compelling and accessible for others to emulate. JCFSD is currently expanding the proportion of Foundation assets allocated to impact investing, and deepening their impact in San Diego, Israel, and around the world. This includes depositing part of their operating reserve in a local community development credit union focused on creating solutions to the racial wealth gap and economic injustice. “While we earn interest, not only are these funds being lent out to communities of color, they are being invested locally, in San Diego. We get a return on investment—and the knowledge that we are doing the right thing,” says Beth.

Recognizing that many donors are new to impact investing, JCFSD engages and empowers current and potential donors to learn about impact investing through site visits to local portfolio organizations and through other educational offerings. These opportunities demonstrate that it is possible to make values-aligned investments and achieve competitive financial returns, as well as high-impact below-market-rate investments. JCFSD is optimistic that new donors will participate in the Impact Investment Pool and other impact investing opportunities they plan to develop.

Suggestions for Fellow Faith Investors

Beth Sirull encourages faith investors to be patient as they begin their impact investing journeys, as if “you are chipping away, like in a quarry.” She advises so “only go for bite size pieces as you get started in achieving your big goals.” The patience and effort will pay off as your impact investing strategy gains traction among your leadership team and other stakeholders.

Beth emphasizes the importance of having mission-aligned leadership and suggests finding one or two champions and building the team and program from there. She pointed to the importance of dialogue. Whether working with your leadership team, investment committee, or engaging with donors/investors, share your story and the journeys of others who are investing for impact; this will help people understand “the why” and also “the how” behind impact investing.



JCFSD put part of their operating reserve with the local [Self-Help Federal Credit Union](#) branch that serves low-income and communities of color in San Diego.

More Faith Investor Profiles and Resources at:

calvertimpactcapital.org/faith

Photo courtesy of Self-Help Federal Credit Union