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METHODOLOGY AND DATA COMPANION

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What happens to federation money after the grant arrives?

Methodology and data companion to the visual essay

Gavriel Brown, PhD

A full interactive visual essay, with the dependence scatter, the expense composition bars, the seniority dumbbell, the three spending signatures and the right-of-reply question set, accompanies this companion.

At a glance	
Research question	What the four organizations receiving the most federation advocacy money do with it once the grant has been banked, and whether the four are usefully described as one phenomenon.
Data	2,267 current IRS Form 990 returns from 265 federation-system entities, tax years 2014 to 2024, carrying 176,663 Schedule I grant lines; joined to the recipients' own returns, IRS Statistics of Income financial extracts, and for the Anti-Defamation League audited consolidated statements through June 2025.
Unit of analysis	The recipient organization in a single tax year, measured on Form 990 Part IX by nature of expense, and the grant dollar aggregated by recipient EIN rather than by name string.
Statistical method	Descriptive throughout. No model is fitted and no significance is claimed. Dependence ratios use a common five-year window on both numerator and denominator; composition figures use the most recent complete year for each organization.
Headline finding	Between 52 and 57 percent of what each of the four spends is payroll, and the largest share any of them passes onward as grants is 6.7 percent. The four sit at very different distances from the federation system, from 3.9 percent of revenue to 68.7 percent.
What it shows	The category line that groups these organizations describes a filing code rather than a common activity. Each spends on something the other three do not, and each would fail differently under the same shock.

The question behind the essay

The visual essay follows $189m of federation money into four organizations and asks what it became. The earlier work in this series stopped at the grant line: it could say how much left a federation and which category it was coded to, and no more. That is where most reporting on communal giving stops, and it is the reason the same four organizations keep being written about as a single decision by a single community to fight antisemitism.

The essay asks three questions the grant file cannot answer. What is each organization's actual relationship to the federation system, measured as dependence rather than as headline dollars? What does each do with a dollar once it arrives, read off its own Part IX rather than its own prose? And what would each look like under stress, given that federation money to at least one of them has already turned down?

The answers separate the four so completely that the aggregate figure stops being informative. That separation is the finding, and this companion documents how it was produced.

Where the data come from

The federation panel and grant file. The same panel as the rest of the series: 2,267 current Form 990 returns from 265 federation-system entities, tax years 2014 to 2024, carrying 176,663 Schedule I grant lines. Fifty-one superseded returns are excluded by the *is_current* flag; including them would double-count 2.6 percent of all dollars. Of the 265 rostered entities, 234 filed in the period and only 207 report a grant schedule at all, which is the denominator any statement about how many funders gave should use.

Recipient financials. Revenue, total functional expenses, every Part IX line by nature of expense, employee counts and the number of employees paid over $100,000, taken from the IRS Statistics of Income 990 extracts where they reach and from the organizations' own filed returns where they do not. The extracts run through tax period December 2023 for calendar-year filers and June 2023 for June filers. Anything later, including the whole of the American Jewish Committee's 2024 column, comes from a filed return or from a third party and is marked as such.

The Anti-Defamation League's audited statements. The audited consolidated statements for the years ended 30 June 2024 and 30 June 2025 are the only source in this piece that names program services and gives a functional split certified by an auditor. They cover the League and the ADL Foundation together, which is not the same reporting entity as the League's own Form 990, and the two are never mixed inside one comparison.

CharityWatch. The April 2026 rating notes are the source for AJC's withheld grade, the two Part IX line amounts it queries, the dates of its letter and the three named media contractors. No AJC document was obtained directly. Every figure that rests on CharityWatch alone is attributed to CharityWatch in the essay's own text, not asserted.

The measures, named and explained

Dependence. Five years of grants from the federation system, 2018 to 2022, divided by five years of the organization's own total revenue over the same period. A common window is used for all four because a single-year ratio can exceed 100 percent on grant timing alone: the JCRC of New York closes in June while most of its funders close in December, and the naive 2023 figure for it is 109.7 percent. The window ends at 2022 because the Anti-Defamation League's year end moved during 2023, leaving a six-month stub period and no comparable 2023 figure.

Concentration. The share of all federation-system grants to an organization arriving from its single largest funder, computed over the full eleven years rather than the five-year window, because concentration is a structural fact and not a period one. The word funder is used rather than federation on purpose. The largest funder of both AJC and ADL is the Jewish Communal Fund, a donor-advised sponsor whose grant line aggregates an unknown number of separate donor recommendations. Both the largest funder and the largest funder that is itself a community federation are reported.

Payroll. Officer compensation plus other salaries plus pension plus other employee benefits plus payroll taxes, divided by total functional expenses. It excludes contract labor, which at AJC is the fastest growing line and would raise the figure materially if counted as staff cost.

The composition bands. Part IX reports by nature of expense, not by function, so a salary cannot be split into program and fundraising from the line items. The essay's composition chart names payroll, outside professional fees, information technology, occupancy, a pooled band of the remaining itemized lines, grants passed onward, and a final band that is the arithmetic residual after all named lines are subtracted. That residual band is labeled as not itemized in the return rather than hidden in an other category, because at the JCRC of New York it is 29.4 percent of spending and has been between 25 and 29 percent every year since 2018.

Seniority. Employees paid over $100,000 from Part VII, as a percentage of total employees from Part I line 5. The end year differs by organization, 2022 for the Anti-Defamation League and 2023 for the other three, and each row in the essay is labeled with its own window rather than described as a common period.

The entity problem, named and explained

The Anti-Defamation League files as two organizations and is discussed in public as one. Getting this wrong produces most of the errors a reader could catch in a piece like this, so the rule is stated rather than assumed.

Where the two are combined. The dependence ratio, the concentration figure, the revenue and expense series and the net-asset months all use the League, EIN 13-1818723, together with the ADL Foundation, EIN 13-2887439, on both sides of every ratio. The audited statements are published on that basis, so combining matches the only certified source available.

Where they are kept apart. The composition chart and the seniority figures are the League alone, and the essay says so where they appear. They cannot be consolidated, because the Foundation reports the same employee counts as the League in 2018 and 2019 and none at all from 2020, so no consistent headcount series exists across the two.

What the split does to the pass-through figure. The League grants out 0.7 percent of what it spends. The Foundation granted out $15.6m in 2022, four fifths of its spending. Consolidated, the figure is 13.6 percent. The filings do not disclose how much of the Foundation's grantmaking went to the League rather than to outside organizations, so all three numbers are reported with that caveat attached and none is used as the headline. The headline pass-through figure in the essay is AJC's 6.7 percent, which is unambiguous.

Why this matters beyond ADL. The same structure runs through the federation roster itself, where 209 federations sit beside 56 foundation arms. Any figure that collapses a parent and its affiliated entity into one number will move, sometimes by an order of magnitude, depending on which side of the pair the money was booked.

Key results from the essay

The four tables below carry every figure the essay plots. Table 1 places the organizations; Tables 2 and 3 describe how they spend and who they employ; Table 4 gives each organization's own distinguishing series; Table 5 gives the cushion each holds.

Table 1. The four organizations and their distance from the federation system.

Organization	Received	Funders	Fed. share	Largest funder	Share	Largest federation
American Jewish Committee	$57.3m	45	6.3%	Jewish Communal Fund	33.4%	Detroit, 29.7%
JCRC of New York	$50.7m	6	68.7%	UJA-Federation of New York	91.3%	UJA-Federation, 91.3%
Anti-Defamation League	$45.5m	67	3.9%	Jewish Communal Fund	18.4%	Philadelphia, 11.7%
Secure Community Network	$35.8m	19	61.1%	Jewish Federations of N. America	84.2%	JFNA, 84.2%

Note. Received is dollars as filed, 2014 to 2024, and the four sum to $189.3m, of which $135.7m came from entities the roster classes as federations and $53.6m from foundation arms. Federation share is grants 2018 to 2022 over the organization's own revenue across the same five years. AJC's total excludes $829,913 filed under its EIN whose recipient names identify the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee or the Atlanta Jewish Film Festival. ADL combines the League and the Foundation on both sides.

Table 2. What each dollar of spending is, by nature of expense.

Share of expenses	AJC	ADL	SCN	JCRC
Payroll	54.2%	56.5%	55.9%	51.9%
Outside professional fees	14.3%	9.5%	7.0%	11.4%
Information technology	1.5%	5.0%	23.0%	0.9%
Occupancy	3.9%	8.6%	1.4%	1.6%
Other itemized lines	18.2%	15.9%	12.2%	4.9%
Grants passed onward	6.7%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Not itemized in the return	1.3%	3.9%	0.5%	29.4%
Total expenses	$82.7m	$100.2m	$21.4m	$9.9m

Note. Years are AJC 2023, ADL 2022, SCN 2023, JCRC of New York FY2023. Columns sum to 100 percent. The ADL column is the League alone. The final row before the total is an arithmetic residual, not a category the return names.

Table 3. Headcount and the share of it paid over $100,000.

Organization	Window	Staff	Then	Staff	Now
JCRC of New York	2018–23	22	27.3%	35	51.4%
Secure Community Network	2018–23	11	27.3%	105	43.8%
American Jewish Committee	2018–23	289	30.4%	356	31.7%
Anti-Defamation League	2018–22	485	18.6%	553	28.4%

Note. Windows differ because the most recent available year differs by organization. Neither ADL series is monotonic: headcount runs 485, 496, 439, 501, 553 and the six-figure count runs 90, 120, 139, 129, 157, so the endpoints understate the movement inside the period. Counts over $100,000 are 6 to 18, 3 to 46, 88 to 113 and 90 to 157.

Table 4. The four spending signatures.

Org	Series	Start	Middle	End
AJC	Communications program	$4.6m	$10.9m	$27.3m
AJC	Government and Intl. Affairs	$23.6m	$29.4m	$26.1m
AJC	Outside professional fees	$3.20m	$11.79m	$24.2m
ADL	Public Awareness	$15.6m	—	$18.6m
ADL	Education	$12.3m	—	$9.8m
SCN	Information technology	$0.02m	$1.56m	$4.92m
SCN	Total expenses	$1.8m	$14.4m	$21.4m

Note. AJC rows run FY2022, FY2023, FY2024; ADL rows FY2024 against FY2025; SCN rows 2018, 2022, 2023. AJC's 2024 column and its $24.2m professional fees figure are not in the SOI extract and come from the filed return and from CharityWatch respectively. ADL program figures are from the audited consolidated statements; total program services moved 1 percent between those two years while the mix moved. SCN's 2018 information technology line is $16,511.

Table 5. Revenue, expenses and the cushion.

Organization	Revenue	Expenses	Months
American Jewish Committee	$88.1m	$82.7m	38.7
Anti-Defamation League, combined	$137.6m	$133.9m	16.2
ADL Foundation alone	$16.8m	$13.1m	124.8
Anti-Defamation League alone	$105.4m	$100.2m	3.8
JCRC of New York	$9.5m	$9.9m	6.3
Secure Community Network	$25.3m	$21.4m	2.9

Note. Latest available year for each: AJC 2023, ADL combined FY2025, ADL Foundation 2023, ADL alone 2022, JCRC FY2023, SCN 2023. Months are net assets over monthly operating expenses and are an upper bound on resilience rather than cash, since net assets include endowment and fixed assets. ADL's combined operating surplus went from $37.0m in FY2024 to $3.7m in FY2025 as revenue fell 20 percent and expenses held flat, though FY2025 revenue remains above the $128.1m the two entities took in 2022.

How to read the results

Table 1 is the table to read first, because everything else follows from where an organization sits in it. The two organizations at the top, AJC and ADL, are national bodies for which federation money is a small minority of revenue and arrives from dozens of sources. The other two are organizations the federation system effectively funds. Nothing forces those four points into an order, but the order they fall into predicts the rest: the two dependent organizations are the two with the thinnest cushions in Table 5.

Table 2 is the answer to the essay's title question and it is almost monotonous across the four. Whatever else these organizations differ on, they all convert federation money into salary at about the same rate. The interesting row is the second from the bottom, and it is interesting because it is empty of meaning: nearly a third of the JCRC of New York's spending is not itemized on any line of its return.

Table 4 is where the four separate. Read each row as a separate organization rather than as a comparison, because the series are not commensurable. AJC's is a program reclassification story, ADL's is a mix shift inside a flat total, and SCN's is an organization changing what kind of thing it is. The one comparison that does hold across all four is Table 3, where the share of staff paid over $100,000 rose everywhere.

Table 5 should be read with Table 1 beside it. The Secure Community Network takes 61 percent of its revenue from the federation system across the window, 28 percent in 2023 alone, with 85 percent of that arriving through a single national channel, and holds under three months of net assets. Federation money to it fell from $7.2m in 2023 to $4.5m in 2024.

What the numbers do not claim

Nothing here establishes that any organization misallocated anything. The AJC section reports that a watchdog asked a question and that no answer has been published, and it states the ordinary innocent explanation, which is that administrative costs do not scale with a budget so a program share can rise during rapid growth. AJC's own account of how it draws the line is not in the essay because it was not obtained.

The word federation is doing work it cannot quite bear in Table 1. Two of the four largest single funders are not community federations: the Jewish Communal Fund is a donor-advised sponsor whose grant line aggregates individual donor recommendations, and the Jewish Federations of North America is a national body passing money onward. The table names both and gives the largest actual federation as well, but any sentence beginning "federations chose" should not be built on those two rows.

The composition figures are one year each and the years differ. They are a snapshot of how each organization spends, not a trend, and the essay does not claim a direction from them.

The dependence ratio divides five years of grants by five years of revenue, which smooths the fiscal-year mismatch but does not describe the present. SCN's 61.1 percent is a window average; its 2023 figure is 28.4 percent and its 2024 figure is 16.5 percent. Present-tense claims in the essay use the single-year figures.

Two things could not be verified from any available source and are flagged in the essay rather than resolved. Whether the ADL Foundation's $15.6m of grants paid in 2022 went to the League or to outside organizations, which decides whether the consolidated pass-through rate is 13.6 percent or close to zero. And whether anything in the JCRC of New York's unitemized 29 percent would change the picture of what it spends money on.

Finally, this is four organizations examined one at a time. It is not a sample of anything, and no statement here generalizes to the roughly 390 other recipients in the same category.

Corrections applied after verification

Every memo and essay in this series is checked by an adversarial reader before publication, working from the database and the source files with a brief to find errors rather than to confirm results. That pass found twenty-two problems in the first draft of this essay. Six changed a published number or a claim.

Draft figure	What was wrong, and what it became
AJC professional fees, 2022	A column read across: $4.90m is the conferences line. Corrected to $3.20m, which makes the subsequent rise larger
Dependence window	ADL computed over five years, the others over six. Now a common 2018 to 2022 window for all four
ADL revenue series	League alone to 2022, then the consolidated audit, drawn as one unbroken line. Now consolidated throughout, and the surplus claim narrowed
Figure 1 y-axis	Largest funders described as federations. Each is now named, with the largest actual federation alongside
JCRC residual	29 percent of spending drawn in a near-background color inside an "everything else" band. Now its own labeled band, named in the caption
Matched recipients	Stated as 89. Corrected to 88

Note. The remaining sixteen were rounding, wording that implied more than the data supported, a chart color invisible in dark mode, and figures stated in the present tense that described a multi-year average.

Reproducing the analysis

The essay's additions run as a single pass over the federation database and five recipient-side exports. Grant totals and funder counts come from the *v_grants* view filtered to the four recipient EINs and aggregated by EIN rather than by name string, which matters because organizations with regional offices file under several names. Every other figure comes from the published data files: *four_orgs_panel.csv* for grants by year with funder counts, *four_orgs_funders.csv* for every funder with dollars and entity kind, *four_orgs_spending_lines.csv* for every Part IX line plus headcount and six-figure earner counts from 2018 to 2023, *four_orgs_program_expenses.csv* for program-level spending with the source of each figure and the ADL restatement flagged, *four_orgs_revenue_reserves.csv* for revenue, net assets and net-asset months, and *four_orgs_reconciliation.csv* for published headline figures against recomputed ones.

The four recipient EINs are 13-5563393 for the American Jewish Committee, 13-2869041 for the JCRC of New York, 13-1818723 and 13-2887439 for the Anti-Defamation League and its Foundation, and 20-1437733 for the Secure Community Network. Grant dollars aggregated on those EINs reconcile to the source database with no residual once the $829,913 of misfiled AJC lines is removed.

One reporting caution for anyone going to the ADL audits directly. The FY2025 audit restates the FY2024 comparatives, raising Development, total supporting services, total operating expenses and total operating revenues each by $1,681,937, with the explanation that certain prior year amounts were reclassified for consistency. Total program services was not restated. Development falls 11 percent between the two years on the restated base and 3.8 percent against the number first published.