

Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago

2026 High School Israel Experience Scholarship

For programs beginning January through May 2027

The FACTS Financial Aid Application must be completed by November 9, 2026

ELIGIBILITY & GUIDELINES

1. To be **eligible** to apply for a financial need scholarship, you must:
 - ✓ Demonstrate financial need.
 - ✓ Live in metropolitan Chicago.
 - ✓ Be enrolled in grades 9-12 as of September 2026.
 - ✓ Have already applied to an approved Israel experience program of work, study or travel in Israel *which does not begin until after the application deadline*. **However, you may apply for a scholarship before you have received your acceptance to the program.**
 - ✓ Participate in Jewish communal activities when you return from Israel.
2. **Siblings:** Families sending more than one child on an Israel experience program may only request financial assistance for one child in a single academic year, except in the instance of twins or other multiples. For example, a sophomore and a senior could not apply in the same year, nor could a college student and a high school student from the same family.
3. **Returning participants:** Although students who have traveled to Israel before, with or without the help of a JUF scholarship, are eligible to apply, priority will be given to first-time participants. *JUF scholarships cannot be used to extend a current program or for programs that are substantially similar to a program in which the applicant has already participated.*
4. **Students currently in Israel:** Whether or not you have received a JUF scholarship for your current program, if you are in Israel during the application period you are *not* eligible to apply for a scholarship. Furthermore, only one JUF scholarship may be applied to any given Israel experience program, and scholarships cannot be used to extend a current program or for programs that are substantially similar to a program in which the applicant has already participated.
5. **Income guidelines:** Please keep in mind that our funds are limited, and requests always greatly exceed demand. We work hard to make sure that the neediest families are given priority. While we do consider the family's total financial picture, not just income, *families earning in excess of \$150,000 annually (including all sources) are not permitted to apply and will be withdrawn.*

TO COMPLETE YOUR APPLICATION, YOU WILL NEED TO INCLUDE:

- Detailed copies of all pages and schedules of your 2024 and 2025 Federal Income Tax Return Form 1040, 1040A or 1040EZ (**as filed with the IRS**) for parents/guardians listed. Recaps and/or Summary Forms are not acceptable. If you file Schedule A, B, C, D, E or F, you must provide copies. If you do not have a tax return for either of these last two years, please contact our office at isralexperience@juf.org.
- Copies of all 2025 W-2 Wage and Tax Statement Forms for parents/guardians listed.
- Verification of program costs from sponsoring organization (webpage printout, brochure, or letter from organization).

IMPORTANT: If the above items are not included, your application will not be considered complete.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- **The goals of the Jewish United Fund Israel Experience scholarship program are to develop increased Jewish identity, greater commitment to Israel and the Chicago Jewish community, and leadership in the Jewish community.**
- JUF scholarship funds are limited, and we have many requests for financial assistance. Therefore, we must examine the resources of each family carefully to be sure that the scholarships are granted to the applicants deemed most in need of financial assistance. We want you to understand that **the basic requirement for a JUF scholarship is the demonstration of financial need.** While income alone is not the only determinant, applicants from families with lower incomes will usually receive higher priority than applicants from families with higher incomes. Please note: Applicants with JUF Israel Experience Savings (including SKIP, Gift of Israel, and B'nai Mitzvah Certificates) are required to use their funds toward the cost of the Israel experience program if awarded a financial need scholarship.
- Although we ask about the applicant's activities, we want you to know that this is not a merit scholarship application, and that prior involvement in Jewish communal activities is not a requirement for receiving a financial need scholarship.
- **No full scholarships are awarded.** Applicants are required to seek other scholarship assistance in addition to the JUF scholarship. Possible sources of other financial assistance include the organization sponsoring the Israel program, your synagogue or religious day school, if applicable, and any other sources available to you. However, public solicitation of funding will make your family ineligible for JUF funding. We expect parents to make an appropriate contribution toward the cost of the program, and we expect that applicants will also contribute toward the cost of their trip. Our average scholarship awards range from \$500-\$4,000.
- Families may apply for only one JUF financial need scholarship in any one academic year, except in the instance of twins or other multiples. Applicants must wait a full year before applying for a second JUF financial need scholarship and are only eligible to do so if the second program is substantially different from the previous program.
- Applicants must apply to an approved Israel program (which does not begin until after the application deadline) before they are eligible to apply for a JUF scholarship. **They can, however, apply for a scholarship before being accepted to the Israel program.** However, they **MUST** be accepted to the Israel program before they can receive any scholarship funds. If you are applying to several programs, please submit your first choice of program and include verification of program costs for that program. If you ultimately choose a different program, you can provide us with the new name and verification of program costs later.
- The Scholarship Committee of the Jewish United Fund will make the final decisions on the awarding of scholarships after assessing each applicant's situation on an individual basis and in comparison to the other applicants. Remember that this is only an application for financial assistance and that no guarantee or promise of receiving a scholarship can be made until the Scholarship Committee reaches its decisions.
- JUF will treat your application and all of the information provided to us with the strictest confidentiality. Your name and other identifying information will not be included in any materials sent to the Scholarship Committee.
- You will be notified of the Scholarship Committee's decision by email (via FACTS) by mid-December. No information on scholarship awards will be given by phone. The balance of fees due to the program is your and your family's personal responsibility. If the applicant fails to complete the Israel experience program, your family will have to repay the scholarship award to the Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago.
- We ask that you provide any other information that you think would be helpful to us in making our evaluation of your application.

If you or your family has any questions about eligibility, about answering the questions on the application, or about any of the required materials, please email isralexperience@juf.org.