



JEWISH LIFE PROGRAM OFFICER

Frequently Asked Questions

Because we value your time and want you to invest your time only if the role feels like it could be right for you, we've written these FAQs. Our intention is that you will have as much information upfront as possible about the role and William Davidson Foundation.

THE BASICS

- **Staff Size:** 20 full-time staff and 2 consultants based in Israel
- **Annual Operating Budget:** ~\$71M (of which \$60M is granted)
- **Core Focus Areas:** Jewish Life, Cultural and Civic Vitality, Economic Vitality, Education, with a geographic emphasis on Southeast Michigan and Israel
- **Anticipated Start Date:** By September 2022

Where is the job located?

The William Davidson Foundation is currently headquartered in Troy, MI, and we are developing plans for a new office in Bloomfield Hills, MI (5 minutes from the current office). The William Davidson Foundation has also opened a satellite office at the new Detroit Pistons' practice facility (Mr. Davidson was the owner of the team from 1974-2009), where Foundation team members have the opportunity to use the space as desired - be it to answer emails, meet with grantees, or host small gatherings.

Do you prefer local candidates?

Yes. Much of the Foundation's work has historically been based locally in the Detroit area, and as such, all staff (with the exception of our Venture Fund Fellow and our Israel-based consultants) are currently located in the area. We believe there are many benefits to being local, and that the Detroit area has much to offer to those already here, and those willing to make this area home.

How much travel is required for this role?

This role may require occasional travel outside of Michigan. At this time, we believe that the majority of travel will be within Southeast Michigan to our grantee locations and external meetings and/or conferences.

What type of work model is place?

Pre-pandemic, the Foundation team worked in the office, five days a week and then shifted to a fully remote work arrangement at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Over these last two plus years, we learned that remote work is possible and recognize that it is often a beneficial arrangement that supports a healthy work/life balance. We also believe there are important benefits of in-person work to our organizational culture, relationship-building, and team cohesiveness.

Our new way of working is a hybrid work model which supports a gradual and cautious return to the office and is intended to balance opportunities for in-person connection, conversation, and collaboration – while offering continued flexibility.

Our office is open for staff to work every day, if they choose, but it is on a voluntary basis. We have designated in-office days in which all staff are expected to be working at the Troy office. These days include every Tuesday, Wednesday, Board/Grant Committee, and All-Team Meeting days, and for other team and culture-building events. Managers may also request additional in-office days for anyone on their team based on business-related needs where there is a clear benefit of in-person attendance.

This hybrid model is in effect until at least December 31, 2022. During this time, our established COVID taskforce will assess and evaluate the approach and what we might want to consider for in-office work going forward. As we have done at the onset of the pandemic, we will continue to look to our organizational values to guide our planning, decision-making, and re-imagining new ways of operating.

What are the business hours?

Generally, daily business hours at the William Davidson Foundation are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Given the hybrid model that is in place at this time, the team is offered greater flexibility with their work schedule. The Foundation understands that every individual is juggling multiple priorities - professional and personal - in this new way of working and that there is a greater emphasis and need for flexible hours. It is expected, regardless of work location, all staff are present and engaged in large organizational team meetings and events, along with internal and external meetings that are conducive to one's particular job responsibilities. Communication with one's manager is expected and key to be successful to maintain and support this flexibility.

What Jewish holidays are observed?

The Foundation observes the following Jewish holidays: first days of Passover (if it falls on a weekday), Yom Kippur, and Rosh Hashanah. We also offer choice holidays as an additional paid time-off benefit to provide everyone the flexibility to honor, observe and celebrate days of personal significance, in their own way. Choice holidays are not prescribed by the Foundation at this time; they may be used at staff's discretion and taken on a day they choose. The number of choice holidays offered to staff will vary year to year and are not eligible for carry-over into the following year.

What is the paid time-off benefits?

Every calendar year, the Foundation offers a schedule of paid holidays in which the office is closed and there is no expectation that staff are working. This includes select Jewish holidays (as listed above), common paid federal holidays, and additional days at year-end – similar to our peer foundations. These paid holidays are determined in advance of every year and the number of days will vary year to year. We also offer a generous PTO package which can be used for vacation, personal business, or sick days.

What other benefits are offered?

Some of the benefits the Foundation offers include medical, dental, and vision benefits for full-time employees, paying 90% of the cost for the employee. We also offer flexible spending accounts, life insurance at no cost to the employee, medical/family leave, bereavement leave, a retirement savings program, and a matching gifts program.

THE ROLE:

What's the reporting structure?

You will report to the Program Director, Jewish Life-[Kari Alterman](#), and you will be an active contributor to the program team.

What's the main charge for the Jewish Life team?

The William Davidson Foundation makes grants and engages in programming across four long-term focus areas: Jewish Life, Economic Vitality, Cultural and Civic Vitality, and Education. On a day-to-day basis, the grantmaking group is organized into three teams: Southeast Michigan, Israel, and Jewish Life.

As the Foundation moves beyond our 'start-up' phase, the focus of the Jewish life portfolio continues to refine around the important themes of Detroit, Leading Educators, Cutting-Edge Programs and Products, and Israel. While not a departure from investment areas made over the past decade, the Foundation is now looking to move from grantmaking to change-making. In Detroit, we are leaning into our partnerships with other philanthropists and community institutions to see how we can continue to ensure that Detroit's Jewish community is the best mid-sized community in North America.

We have an appetite for calculated risk, a commitment to community, ongoing exposure to national and global trends and opportunities, and thought leaders that can take the agencies and organizations we support to the next level. We're looking to deepen our relationships with individual leaders we have supported (e.g., Davidson Scholars through the [Wexner Foundation Scholars](#) program) to keep us in tune with the emerging opportunities on the ground. With our venture work, we are refining our approach to supporting growth-stage entrepreneurial ventures. We see our deep commitment to Israel as a Jewish and democratic state as essential to our work. While we have both Israel-based and Israel-related programs we support, our commitment to Zionism is felt throughout the portfolio and the Foundation.

What is it like to work with Kari?

[Kari Alterman](#) is the Program Director for Jewish Life at the William Davidson Foundation. She joined the Foundation in 2015.

As a manager and collaborator, Kari seeks to be as transparent as possible and prefers 'everyone to know everything.' She has built strong relationships with the community, board, and grantees through her warm and kind presence and ambassadorship of the Foundation's values. She works well with teammates who can bring structure and process to the work. She values open and frequent feedback and works well with people who manage up to her.

Other Jewish Life team members are [Vadim Avshalumov](#), Program Officer, who works both in the Jewish Life and Southeast Michigan portfolios, and [Jenn Goldstone](#), our Venture Fellow, who is working to create and begin implementation of an exciting grantmaking tool inspired by venture-style investments.

THE ORGANIZATION:

What is the culture of the William Davidson Foundation?

The William Davidson Foundation deeply values partnership - be it among the team, with the board, or with grantees. We highly value relationship building and bringing all of our team's expertise to bear. A family foundation at heart, Mr. Davidson's family serve as an active and accessible board, and they are particularly committed to the success of this role and to supporting more scalable innovation in the space. Like Mr. Davidson, the culture is optimistic and creative.

The William Davidson Foundation has [four core values](#) anchored in how Mr. Davidson led and lived his life. They offer the team a shared mindset and framework to guide our work, make decisions, build relationships, and serve as leaders within our organizational culture, and externally in the community.

What are the unwritten rules for success on the William Davidson Foundation team?

Quotes from the team...

- *Relationships really matter. While we don't aim to be perpetual funders, we build long-term, strong relationships with grantee partners. We value responsiveness and engagement in meetings to show people we value them and their time. We appreciate team members who bring a positive attitude and are open to having light-hearted laughs with their teammates. We respect personal boundaries while also valuing connection with one another.*
- *We are a family foundation with living family on our board who are direct descendants and advisors to our founder. The board brings their brilliance and experience to their key leadership role in our strategic direction and decision-making.*
- *Be open to ambiguity. Plans will change and processes are tweaked when needed. You'll be successful if you are adaptable, optimistic, and can be comfortable with ambiguity.*
- *The folks that do well here have a combination of excellence in analysis and deference in judgment.*
- *Investing in timely and thoughtful communication is important. Give people lead time, bring them along in the process, communicate early and often, proactively share even if it's not requested, and overcommunicate what you're working on.*
- *Spend time mapping out who in the Foundation will help you be successful and push your work through. Figure out what leadership needs to see to engender trust and then work hard to build it early on.*
- *Work hard to lift up others at the organization and root for their success. In turn, they will root for your success. Be transparent, admit your mistakes, don't overcommit and underdeliver, and keep your do-to-say ratio high.*

What is the William Davidson Foundation doing about Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion?

As a relatively young organization, the Foundation is early in building its roadmap and formally addressing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work. We know that committing to DEI means playing the long game. This is not a moment in time, with ad-hoc programs or activities, but instead an on-going, collaborative journey. The Foundation knew it would greatly benefit from partnering with a DEI consultant, who has deep experience working with organizations to achieve DEI as an outcome and could effectively lead and guide us down this path. The team started with two organizational trainings focused on building a deeper understanding, appreciation, and connection with one another. The trainings served as building blocks to help get us started on this DEI journey. Since that time, colleagues have been actively working together to define the who, what, and why of diversity, equity, and inclusion for the Foundation. This will help to create a DEI mission statement which is aligned with our mission, strategy, and values.

What makes the William Davidson Foundation unique in the Jewish non-profit sector?

The William Davidson Foundation was founded by Mr. Davidson, a firm believer that the future of the Jewish people – families and children of all denominations for generations to come – was dependent upon the quality, commitment, and reach of its Jewish educators. A family foundation, Mr. Davidson's values are central to how the organization operates. The board is composed of first-generation family members and important people in Mr. Davidson's life, and they leverage their expertise to play an active role in the Foundation.

The Foundation is known for being relationship-driven and for centering its grantees as valuable partners. Our relationships are ongoing, but when it comes to grantmaking, we are increasingly committed to "arcs of investment" with grantees that have clear beginnings, middles, and ends and result in the transformative impacts over that period. We work with organizations in all stages of development but are most comfortable working with trusted entrepreneurial leaders at organizations that are beyond the earliest phases and at important inflection points in their growth and impact. Our average & median grant size (~\$700K) is significantly larger than other private, family foundations and we work with a smaller number of grantees than similarly sized grantmaking organizations.

The Foundation was operationalized with the hiring of our first staff member in 2014 so we still consider ourselves a relatively young organization, at a new phase of development that entails our move from being an excellent grantmaker to a world-class changemaker, with more robust "beyond the check" activities supportive of our grantees and partners, and organizations to help them blossom into their fullest potential.

What if I have other questions?

We welcome any and all questions and encourage candidates to ask them at any point during the interviewing process.