

Annual Impact Report FY25–26

JULY 1, 2025 - JUNE 30, 2026

4,545 CONNECTIONS
Email subscribers, support participants, and program attendees

2,237 UNIQUE ENGAGEMENTS
Program attendees and community-facing interactions

1,297 PEOPLE CONNECTED TO SUPPORT SERVICES
Warmline, support groups, counseling, and text support

94,948 WEBSITE VISITORS*
**Number adjusted for AI bot traffic inflation*

Eshel is building the network, community, and resources that enable LGBTQ+ people and their families to thrive within Orthodox Jewish life, and helping Orthodox communities become more welcoming in the process. Through community-building, advocacy, support, and education, we help ensure that no one has to choose between their identity and their place in Jewish life.

In 2025-2026, we began "branching out" strategically—creating opportunities for belonging, expanding partnerships with synagogues, schools, and community leaders, and deepening support for LGBTQ+ Orthodox Jews and their families. Together, these efforts strengthened LGBTQ+ Jewish identity, equipped leaders to foster inclusion, and advanced a more inclusive Orthodox world.



Building Belonging

IN NATIONAL AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Eshel creates spaces where LGBTQ+ Orthodox Jews and their families can find community and strengthen their Jewish and LGBTQ+ identities.

870

unique individuals came together at **40** in person gatherings and retreats

+334 New Participants in 2025-2026

1,175

LGBTQ+ people and parents connected to **11** recurring local meetup and support groups

+126 New Participants in 2025-2026

3,692

email subscribers

+453 New Contacts in 2025-2026

1,003

members in **15** WhatsApp Groups

+232 New Contacts in 2025-2026



LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Eshel invested in bringing meaningful programming to our Tier 1 regions: Baltimore, Boston, Silver Spring, and South Florida, as well as new programs in Tier 2 regions Atlanta and Chicago, **reaching 374 individuals in person** outside of the NYC area with practice forward programs that enrich identities and communities.

PARTNERSHIPS

Eshel continues to deepen our relationships with **partner organizations**, expanding access to resources, support, and community. We are grateful to Dorshei Torah v'Tzion, Gay Shabbat, I Was Supposed to Have a Baby, International Rabbinic Fellowship, Jewish Community Mental Health Initiative, Jewish Fertility Foundation, Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance, Jewish Queer Youth, Keshet, Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan, Mem Global, PORAT, Sephardic Mizrahi Q Network, Shalom Dykes, Uri L'Tzedek, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, Yeshivat Maharat, and more for demonstrating welcoming and inclusion for LGBTQ+ Orthodox individuals and families.

SPOTLIGHT

LGBTQ+ RETREAT

In March 2026, Eshel held the largest-ever gathering of LGBTQ+ Orthodox Jews at Pearlstone Retreat Center in Reisterstown, Maryland. **With 150 participants** from around the US, Canada, and more, together we learned about building community, chosen family, LGBTQ+ Orthodox weddings, gender performance and constructs, with experts, Rabbis, and community panelists. Participants went home with a sense of belonging, affirmation, and pride in their identities.

> **I feel like a new person after this weekend! Newfound confidence and comfort with myself. This was the most meaningful Shabbat I've experienced in years. Thank you so much ... to everyone who contributed to this amazing experience by showing up as your authentic selves. I've never been prouder to be a gay Jew.**
>
> - **MANNY EHRLICH**, *2026 LGBTQ+ Retreat*

ISRAEL SHABBATON

Eshel hosted a Shabbaton in Kibbutz Lavi, Israel with 48 English-speaking parents of LGBTQ+ children from around the country. Parents engaged with Eshel staff, mental health practitioners, Rabbinic leadership, and volunteers, to dive into their own families and communities, and to understand their children's lives.

READ MORE ↗



Strengthening

INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES

Eshel helps LGBTQ+ people and their families navigate challenges with support, connection, and trusted resources.

1,297 PEOPLE CONNECTED with support services to improve mental health, through meetup groups, one-on-one-counseling, warmline calls, and text conversations.

493	310	83	79	78
WARMLINE CALLS	SUPPORT TICKETS	NEW CONTACTS	TEXT THREADS	THERAPISTS VETTED FOR TRUSTED REFERRAL

6 SUPPORT GROUPS STAFFED by professionals and meeting regularly to help participants feel connected, supported, and empowered to grow.

- LGBTQ+
- WOMEN'S LBTQ+
- PARENTS DROP-IN
- STRAIGHT SPOUSES OF LGBTQ+ PARTNERS
- ORTHODOX PEOPLE OF TRANS EXPERIENCE
- PARENTS OF TRANS & GENDER NONCONFORMING CHILDREN

> **Having lost much of my family and community when I came out as a gay woman, Eshel has helped me rebuild and feel whole again.**
>
> - RIVKY*
> Support Group Participant
> *(*Name changed to protect identities)*

2 ADDITIONAL SUPPORT GROUPS serving communities that are not comfortable openly affiliating with an LGBTQ+ organization, creating alternative pathways to support.



Growing Inclusion
IN ORTHODOXY

Eshel works alongside rabbis, shuls, schools, and community leaders to create more welcoming Orthodox communities. Through relationship-building, education, and community engagement, we make LGBTQ+ inclusion part of Orthodox communal life.

THE WELCOMING SHULS PROJECT
325 Welcoming Shuls

The WSP continues to build relationships with shuls and Rabbis while tracking how communities evolve in their welcome over time and helping Rabbis navigate shifting social and political landscapes. In 2025-2026, we held in-depth conversations with at least **68** Rabbis to help them better understand or work with LGBTQ+ community members.

READ MORE ↗

> **It was amazing to connect with a Rabbi who understands the needs of our community and, especially, the experience of being a parent to an LGBTQ child.**
>
> - MORDECHAI*
> Eshel parent *(*Name changed to protect identities)*

3 ALLYSHIP CONVERSATIONS
Engaging 78 Participants

Eshel brought parents, educators, and allies together in Baltimore, MD, Brookline, MA, and Riverdale, NY to talk about LGBTQ+ inclusion, build connections, share experiences, and increase belonging on a local level.

COMMUNITY VISITS
17 Communities Across the US, Canada, and Israel

This year, Eshel was invited by Jewish communities around the US and Israel to share our work and message of inclusion to communities, shuls, and gatherings in:

- WEST HARTFORD, CT
- WASHINGTON, DC
- SKOKIE, IL
- CAMBRIDGE, SHARON, & BOSTON, MA
- BALTIMORE, MD
- NEW YORK CITY, NY
- SCHENECTADY, NY
- WHITE PLAINS, NY
- COLUMBUS, OH
- PHILADELPHIA, PA
- TORONTO, CANADA
- VANCOUVER, CANADA
- YERUSHALAYIM, BEIT SHEMESH, KIBBUTZ LAVI, MODI'IN, ISRAEL



EDUCATION

- **COLLEGE ORTHODOX ALLIES TRAINING** | 5 fellows from 2 campuses led **5** events and participated in monthly educational sessions on community engagement, building leadership to work for LGBTQ+ Orthodox inclusion on New York college campuses.

- **PORAT WITH YCT** | **264** individuals signed up for "Living a Religious Life as a Transgender Jew: A Halachic Conversation", hosted by PORAT, YCT, and Eshel. The conversation featured a frum trans man in conversation with Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Dov Linzer discussing how he navigates religious life and halachic questions.

  WATCH HERE ▶

- **ESHEL RETREAT SPEAKERS** | The Parent and LGBTQ+ Retreats featured **18** expert educators, rabbis, and LGBTQ+ leaders who shared wisdom, sources, skills, and tools for navigating the complexities of LGBTQ+ Orthodox identity, including five LGBTQ+ Orthodox rabbis and clergy, and 3 in training.

SPOTLIGHT



PRIDE SHABBATOT

10 Orthodox synagogues hosted Pride Shabbat programs, creating new entry points for LGBTQ+ Jews and families. **83 people** made their first connection with Eshel through NYC Pride Shabbatot, and participating communities attracted and deepened relationships with LGBTQ+ attendees.



FAMILY BUILDING SHABBAT DINNER

In December, we hosted a first-of-its-kind panel with **57 people** from two shul communities, featuring representatives of 5 different LGBTQ+ couples and individuals navigating fertility, Halacha, observant life, child-rearing, and community.

Eshel Out Loud

Eshel provides thought leadership on LGBTQ+ Orthodox life, bringing a range of voices and perspectives to light, expanding visibility and challenging assumptions. Through digital and print media, podcasts, and our online presence, we help others recognize that LGBTQ+ and Orthodox identities can coexist.

**number adjusted for AI Bot web traffic inflation*

94,948
WEBSITE VISITORS*

39,001
BLOG VISITORS

26
NEW DIVREI TORAH AND BLOG POSTS

SOCIAL MEDIA

ONLINE INTERACTIONS
↗ 109%

2,377
6,871

ONLINE REACH
↗ 452%

102,083
449,786

LINKEDIN REACH
6,020
IMPRESSIONS

IN THE NEWS

Eshel was featured in 14 news publications, over 10 podcasts, and additional local outlets in 2025-2026. Coverage spotlighted supporting families, strengthening community, and advancing LGBTQ+ inclusion in Orthodox life, while amplifying the voices and experiences of LGBTQ+ Jews. This brought LGBTQ+ Orthodox stories and perspectives to the forefront and increased awareness of the needs of our community and the resources available for support.

SPOTLIGHT

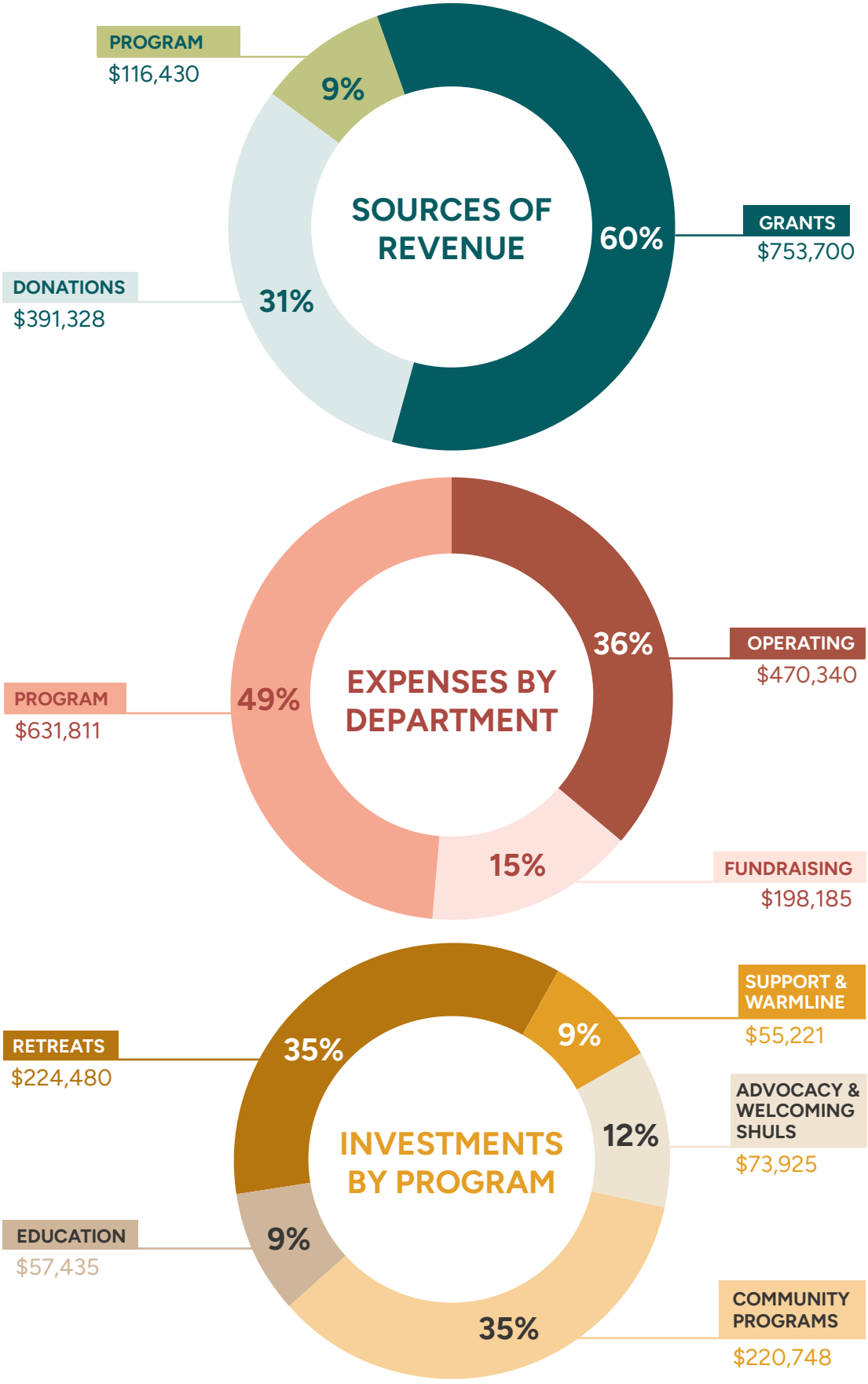
HOW ORTHODOX JEWISH FAMILIES ARE FINDING WAYS TO SUPPORT THEIR TRANS CHILDREN - Eshel's Welcoming Shuls and support for trans families featured in Associated Press coverage.

READ MORE ↗

BOTTOM UP TORAH: HOW QUEER JEWS ARE CHANGING ORTHODOXY - Rabbi Steve Greenberg on how LGBTQ+ Jews are helping shape the future of Orthodox Judaism on the Madlik Podcast. Read more and listen.

READ MORE AND LISTEN ↗

FY25-26 Financials



Thank You

THANK YOU TO OUR FOUNDATION PARTNERS

Anonymous
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R & R: The rest of our lives
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