

Hanukkah Program Report - KEDEM Jacobs JCC

Chisinau, Moldova | 2025/5786

Program Support and Reach

With the support of the Baltic Jewish Forum (BJF), KEDEM Jacobs JCC implemented a multi-layered Hanukkah program that reached more than 350 community members across different generations and three cities.

The grant enabled the organization to combine several key components: direct outreach to isolated seniors, inclusive family programming, intergenerational Shabbat experiences, and regional teen engagement. Through these efforts, Hanukkah became accessible, meaningful, and visible throughout the community.

Program Overview

During Hanukkah 2025, KEDEM Jacobs JCC organized a comprehensive holiday program aimed at reinforcing Jewish identity and promoting intergenerational connections. The initiative also sought to expand engagement within the regional Jewish community. Program activities took place in Chişinău and other regional cities, focusing on meeting the diverse needs of seniors, families, children, volunteers, and teens.

The program's various components were unified by a consistent philosophy: providing warm and personal experiences, fostering a sense of belonging, and making Jewish traditions accessible to every community member, regardless of age or their level of involvement in Jewish life.

1. "Tradition & Care" — Hanukkah Outreach for Seniors

Program Description

Target group: Isolated seniors and volunteers

Participants: 10 seniors (home visits), 20 volunteers **Location:** Chişinău

This initiative was specifically designed for elderly members of the community who, due to health or mobility challenges, were unable to participate in communal Hanukkah events. Volunteers coordinated and carried out home visits, delivering Hanukkah treats, sharing meaningful holiday moments, and spending personal time with each senior to ensure they felt included in the celebrations.

For several of the seniors, these visits provided the only in-person Hanukkah interaction they experienced during the holiday period.

Results and Impact

- Seniors felt remembered, included, and emotionally supported
- Volunteers strengthened a culture of care and responsibility
- Intergenerational connection was reinforced through direct human contact

This approach demonstrated that small-scale, personalized initiatives can have a profound and lasting impact within the community.

2. Hanukkah Cultural Evening & Community Appreciation Event

Target group: Broad community (families, adults, seniors, partners) **Participants:** 100+
Location: Chişinău

As part of the Hanukkah cultural programming, JCC KEDEM hosted a festive community evening that brought together individuals of all ages. The event featured Jewish music, collective celebration, and formal recognition of community partners who have contributed to the ongoing vitality of the organization and community. This gathering provided a vibrant and inclusive atmosphere where the entire community could come together in the spirit of Hanukkah.

Through shared cultural activities and active participation, the evening emphasized the core Hanukkah values of light, resilience, and unity. By celebrating these themes, the event helped to strengthen community trust and foster lasting relationships among members and partners alike.

Results and impact:

- Strengthened Jewish identity through cultural engagement
- Created a shared intergenerational holiday experience
- Reinforced partnerships and community solidarity

3. Community Hanukkah Shabbat — Intergenerational Gathering

Target group: Multigenerational community members
Participants: 50+
Location: JCC KEDEM

The Community Hanukkah Shabbat brought together families, seniors, and young adults for a shared celebration of Shabbat and Hanukkah. Candle lighting, blessings, songs, and a communal meal created a calm and welcoming space for meaningful connection.

Results and impact:

- Increased sense of belonging and community cohesion
- Strengthened continuity of communal Shabbat traditions
- Created space for natural intergenerational dialogue

This gathering reaffirmed the importance of intimate, value-based formats in sustaining community life.

4. Regional Hanukkah Program for Teens (3 Cities)

Target group: Teens aged 13–17
Participants: 50+
Locations: Chişinău and two regional cities

The regional Hanukkah program was designed to connect teens from three different cities, offering an opportunity to broaden their sense of belonging beyond their local clubs. Participants engaged in a program that integrated Havdalah and Hanukkah traditions, interactive group activities, teamwork exercises, and educational sessions centered on Jewish values and leadership development. This format provided a meaningful platform for teens to celebrate together, learn, and strengthen their communal identity.

Results and impact:

- Increased sense of belonging and community cohesion among participating teens
- Strengthened the continuity of communal Shabbat traditions within the teen community
- Created a space for natural intergenerational dialogue, fostering connections between different age groups

5. Family Hanukkah Festival — Large Community Celebration

Target group: Families with children, grandparents, newcomers

Participants: 150+

Location: Chişinău

The Family Hanukkah Festival stood out as the most inclusive event of the holiday season. Designed with an open format, the festival featured multiple activity zones, inviting participants of all ages to join in and engage at their own pace. This approach allowed children, parents, grandparents, and newcomers to feel comfortable and included, fostering a welcoming environment for everyone.

For many families, the festival served as their first introduction to KEDEM Jacobs JCC and to community life, opening the door to future involvement and connection within the Jewish community.

Results and impact:

- The festival fostered an increased sense of belonging and strengthened community cohesion among participants.
- It reinforced the continuity of communal Shabbat traditions, encouraging families to participate in and sustain shared practices.
- Additionally, the event created space for natural intergenerational dialogue, allowing connections to form across age groups and enriching the community experience.

Anastasia D., 16 years old

Participating in the Hanukkah events at KEDEM was a truly meaningful experience. The celebrations brought together children, teenagers, families, and guests from other communities, creating a warm and welcoming atmosphere. We painted Hanukkah candles, took part in games and quizzes, celebrated Havdalah, and shared joyful moments together. Communities from Bălţi and Tiraspol joined us, and it felt like one united community celebrating Hanukkah as one. The events were lively, engaging, and full of warmth — the spirit of Hanukkah could really be felt throughout the celebration.

Larisa K., 55 years old

Every year we look forward to the Hanukkah celebrations at KEDEM, and this year was no exception. The holiday was filled with warmth, joy, and a strong sense of community. The Hanukkah activities were engaging, the sufganiyot were delicious, and lighting the Hanukkah candles created a true feeling of miracle and hope. That light stays with us long after the holiday ends. Thank you to everyone at KEDEM who makes these meaningful moments and shared celebrations possible.

Conclusion

The Hanukkah 2025 program clearly illustrated the positive effects that targeted support can have on a community. With the help of the grant, JCC KEDEM successfully implemented a comprehensive holiday program that welcomed seniors, families, and youth. This inclusive approach not only reinforced Jewish identity but also elevated the visibility of Jewish life throughout the region, making a lasting impact on all participants.

The support provided by the Baltic Jewish Forum was instrumental in bringing this multi-generational and inclusive Hanukkah program to life. We are sincerely thankful for their trust and partnership, which made these meaningful experiences possible for our community.