

**Application to Become a Host Congregation
for the Mitzvah Initiative**

Name of Rabbi: _____

Email and Contact Info for Rabbi: _____

Name of Congregation: _____

Address of Congregation: _____

Faculty who will be teaching the Mitzvah Initiative Sessions

Names and Contact Info:

Scaffolding the Initiative

The Mitzvah Initiative strives to educate and encourage Conservative Jews about their practice. To that end, it is critical that a scaffold of support be established for the following:

- **Recruitment of Participants.** It is not enough to offer the Initiative as an adult education class. Active engagement of many congregants from different parts of the congregation (young parents, active Shabbat worshippers, less-frequent worshippers, Social Action activists, school faculty, cohorts by specific neighborhoods, etc.). Someone energetic in the congregation (lay or professional) should be responsible to find participants, meet with them and discuss the goals of the program. They should also be responsible for keeping up with participants along the way, making sure they are attending, following up if they are not, and generally maintaining communication with the group.
- **Mitzvah Engagement within the Synagogue.** Because synagogues are by nature institutions which support Jewish growth around mitzvah activities, groups for Minyan, Tikun Olam, Shabbat, hospitality, Bikur Holim, often exist. Participants in the Mitzvah Initiative should have a chance to meet some of the leaders of these groups, find out about their activities, and be invited to get involved. Again, this form of engagement is beyond the publicity of the synagogue bulletin and website. This can mean that representatives attend a particular session of the Mitzvah Initiative classes to discuss their work.
- **Ongoing Mitzvah Coaching.** It is also important to identify who will follow up with participants after the Mitzvah Initiative experience. If people become motivated to try new mitzvot, they may need more information, someone to help them get started and answer questions. A supportive and friendly staff person and/or lay person is critical here.
- **Celebration of success.** As the Initiative begins to become infused into individual lives and the life of the community, it is important to recognize and celebrate this growth. Participants can be honored with a special Shabbat, aliyot, recognition for a Tikun Olam project, Tzedakah initiative, ongoing study, etc. Research in other areas of adult Jewish education have shown the impact on peoples' lives when their Rabbi both notices and acknowledges these efforts.
- **Participation in the community of Mitzvah Initiative Congregations.** From time to time we will want to communicate with you about your efforts; any questions you might have, issues, or anecdotes that should be shared nationally. If there are other congregations participating in your area, this is a chance for some joint programming. We will also be asking you to help evaluate the experience at the end of the year and moving forward, so we can continually improve.



The Mitzvah Initiative

To this end, please give thought and discussion with your current staff and selected lay people on how you will construct a scaffold within your congregation that will support the participants and integrate them into the larger synagogue community. Please describe your scaffolding plan below.

Please list the names and contact info for all professionals (please indicate) and lay people who will be on the scaffolding team.

Staff/Title/Contact Info working on scaffolding the Mitzvah Initiative

Lay People/Contact Info working on scaffolding the Mitzvah Initiative

Please make every effort to return this application by April 6. We will acknowledge your application and respond by May 1 so you can complete plans to join us in New York on June 16 and 17.

You may return this application by email (Mitzvah@jtsa.edu), by fax (212-678-8941), or by mail to:

The Jewish Theological Seminary
Mitzvah Initiative – Box 62
3080 Broadway
New York, NY 10027