



## Philanthropy as Opportunity

The Opportunity Fund for Civic Service is a consortium of Israeli and North American partners (Revson Foundation, Arison Foundation, Gandy Foundation, UJA-Federation of New York and an anonymous foundation). Its mission is "to provide young Israeli adults who are unable to serve in the IDF with an opportunity to participate in high-quality national civic service."

While army service in Israel is compulsory and serves as a gateway into Israel's workforce, higher education and top strata of society, half of Israeli youths do not serve. Those not drafted include physically and emotionally disabled young adults, at-risk youth, Israeli Arabs, new immigrants, and those who lack the minimum educational or social skills to be recruited. Israel's national civic service framework does provide young adults an opportunity to serve their society. However, demand for available positions exceeds supply.

The Fund seeks to create a system where anyone who wants to serve can do so, by improving the quality and diversity of volunteering opportunities and by making high-quality enrichment programs available to all participants. Those efforts would be complemented by a rigorous evaluation of the impact of such programs on volunteers' economic, educational, and social mobility. This would help establish quality standards that could be widely adopted across all sectors. The Fund will also seek to expand its network of supporters in order to increase its impact.

In its first months, the Fund has realized two significant achievements:

- After extensive discussions with the Fund, the government issued 1,000 volunteer slots for disabled and at-risk youth in 2013-14, an increase of 550 from 2011-12. It has promised an additional 150 slots next year. For 900 of those slots, the government agreed for the first time to contribute nearly half the enrichment cost (1.4 million NIS).
- The government issued 3,280 slots for Arabs for 2013-14, an increase of 1,480 slots from 2011-12. Furthermore, it has promised an additional 280 Arab slots next year.

The Opportunity Fund is an exciting example of how philanthropic partnerships can inspire additional givers to come together and address large-scale objectives.