

A Guide for High Impact Jewish Learning Models Table of Contents

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Express Innovation: What's it all about?

What is Express Innovation?

Express Innovation, offered by the Jewish Education Project in partnership with the Experiment in Congregational Education and the Leadership Institute, is designed to propel congregations forward in their practice of engaging children and their families in meaningful Jewish learning. Ultimately, it is dedicated to creating Jewish learning that makes a positive difference in the lives of these families, recognizing that living a Jewish life emerges more from shared and meaningful family experiences than from the student-centered classroom model of learning focused on only knowledge acquisition. Express Innovation is designed for congregations who are interested in and have demonstrated a readiness to experiment—within a matter of months—with a high impact, non-classroom-only model of Jewish learning.

How does it work?

Over the past fifteen years, many synagogues around the country have experimented with educational innovation. They engaged in 18-36 month processes to allow for stakeholders to generate energy for change, to develop alternative models of learning, and to take first steps towards innovation. In these congregations, large task forces thoughtfully deliberated and designed new models of learning that have become vital to the lives of their congregations.

Today the Jewish educational landscape has changed and **Express Innovation** congregations are the beneficiaries of this earlier work. Congregations are thirsty for change and successful alternative models of learning no longer have to be created from scratch. Initial decisions can be made by a small team of leaders and others can be brought on board along the way. By learning about a variety of existing models and then choosing one to adapt (or creating something new), **Express Innovation** congregations can begin implementing a new model of learning quicker and see the impact on their families sooner. In addition, fifteen years of knowledge about what makes for successful congregational innovation can be built into the decision-making and implementation process.

Express Innovation embraces the idea that there are specific change “boosters” that, when activated, increase the likelihood of successful implementation of a chosen model.

The 4 Change Boosters in Express Innovation are:

1. Data
2. Communication
3. Social connections
4. Reflection

Data makes the case for innovation. It provides decision-makers and participants with indicators and evidence that desired outcomes are being achieved. As such, it serves to prove the positive difference the new model is making which then becomes a driver of expanded innovation. Also, keeping good records of decision-making provides a paper (or digital) trail that you can refer back to when it is time for future leadership to step in.

Leveraging **Social connections** is too often overlooked as a determinant of success. Tapping into existing social networks among your families can likely provide a willing base of participants. Identifying social “connectors” can help expand that base. By building and expanding personal relationships among your participants you can graft Jewish experiences into the narratives of their lives. By listening to the stories and dreams of your participants you can create meaningful experiences for them which will, in turn, convert them into your most enthusiastic cheerleaders and owners.

Communication needs to be two-way and continual. Letting the congregation and leadership know how things are proceeding as well as sharing with them reactions from participants builds pride and ownership. Inviting feedback and reactions strengthens interest and support.

Reflection requires that you step back periodically and put your activity and efforts into a bigger and broader context. It asks you to see what you are doing through different eyes. Reflective thinking helps clarify what need to be the next steps to sustain your innovation. Your emerging insights in how and what to innovate will be crucial to communicate with others in your congregation (e.g. teachers, families, boards).

In order for **Express Innovation** to take hold, the initial implementation of your model is expected to engage a minimum of 10% of your target population, three to five times over a three month period. This can either be a grade or age-specific group of students and their families or a mixed group. However, *from the outset, the initial implementation will replace classroom-only learning.* It is expected that, with appropriate support, within three years the majority of families in the congregation will be engaged in your high-impact model, as a replacement for classroom-only learning.

What kinds of support are available?

Funding, materials, information, and guidance from a variety of sources are available to **Express Innovation** congregations:

For congregations chosen to participate in **Express Innovation**, **\$2500** for 2011-2012 is available to help offset unanticipated costs during this time of planning and transition. Allocation of these funds is dependent on the congregation meeting agreed-upon deadlines and deliverables.

Express Innovation printed materials (e.g. background information, exercises, suggested action plans) are provided in order to give congregational teams the rationales and guidance they need to plan for and implement their models.

Each **Express Innovation** congregational team is assigned a **consultant** who is familiar with the goals of the project and educational innovation in the congregational setting. These consultants will be in conversation to support your work up to five hours a month, whether in person (monthly), by email and/or over the phone. They should be intimately involved in the team's decision-making and will guide the team along the **Express Innovation** roadmap and the monthly action plans. They are particularly helpful in planning for meetings with leadership, connected families, participants, and teachers/facilitators, in de-briefing those conversations, and in designing the new educational experiences for children and families.

The cohort of Express Innovation congregations will have multiple opportunities to formally meet. In addition to the early summer Orientation, there will be a Summer Institute, August 10 and 11, regional fall and spring Living and Learning sessions and a *Yachdav* gathering in the spring. The cohort is encouraged to stay in touch with each other during the year to share progress and discuss common challenges. Innovators need innovators.

The resources of the **Jewish Education Project, the Experiment in Congregational Education and the Leadership Institute** always are available to the teams and/or the congregations' leadership to answer questions and provide additional information about the overall project.

Express Innovation

Orientation

June 16th, 2011

AGENDA	
6:00pm – 6:30pm	Buffet dinner and informal text study (<i>please sit by assigned table indicated on back of name tag – thank you!</i>)
6:40pm – 7:00pm	Opening, welcome and connection question
7:00pm – 7:05pm	Road Map of Express Innovation: Rationale
7:05pm – 7:25pm	Road Map of Express Innovation: Four Boosters
7:25pm – 7:45pm	Road Map of Express Innovation: Integrating Four Boosters and Time Line
7:45pm - 8:30pm	Road Map of Express Innovation: Unveiling the Models
8:30pm – 8:45pm	Road Map of Express Innovation: Working Towards a Selection
8:45pm	Reflections
9:00pm	Departures – see you on August 10 th and 11 th !

Sample Announcement of congregation's participation in Express Innovation

(to be adapted as needed)

[Name of congregation] Embarks on Jewish Learning Innovation

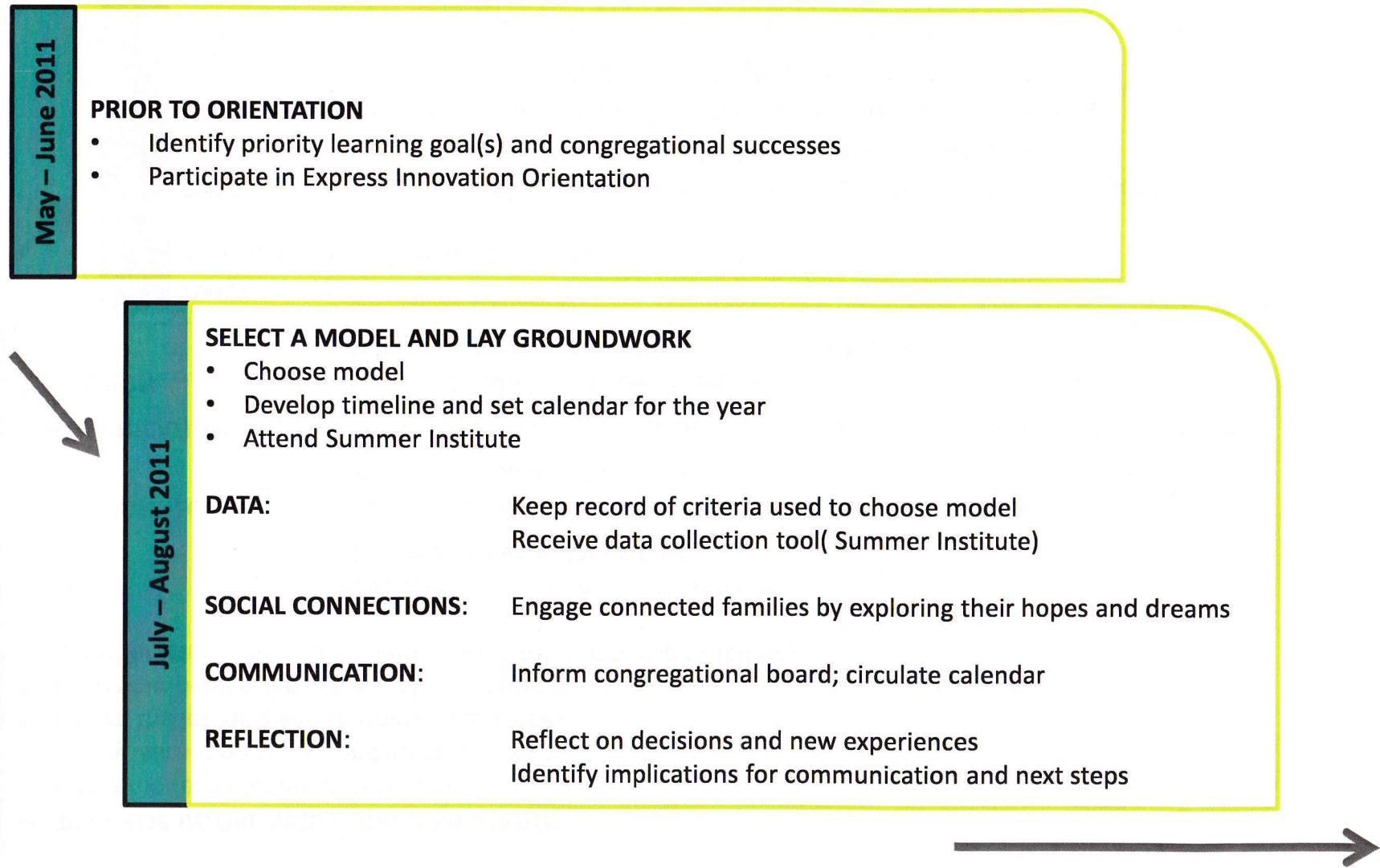
We are proud to announce that [name of congregation] has been chosen to participate in an exciting project that will profoundly transform Jewish learning for our children and families. The name of the project is Express Innovation and it is designed to propel congregations like ours forward in their practice of engaging children and their families in meaningful Jewish learning beyond the classroom. Offered by the Jewish Education Project, a beneficiary of the UJA Federation of New York, the team of [list your team members' names here] will attend a series of meetings and receive printed materials and the services of an educational consultant who will guide them through the steps necessary to choose and implement a new model of Jewish learning for our congregation. Our congregation has also received a \$2500 stipend to help us through this transition.

[List Orientation participants here] have just returned from the Express Innovation orientation session and there they had a chance to meet teams from other congregations pursuing the same goals as well as the project's consultants and staff. [Quote team members about the orientation experience and what excites them about the possibilities for your congregation.]

Express Innovation represents the latest thinking in the synagogue transformation movement that has taken hold around the country over the past fifteen years. It recognizes that, though each congregation has its own personality and culture, they share many similarities and are looking for answers to many of the same questions. Engaging children and their families in Jewish living and learning that fits in with what they find meaningful and how they live their lives is key. By considering adapting one of the many new models of Jewish learning that now exist we will be able to begin touching the lives of our congregants during the upcoming school year.

Expect to hear more in the months to come about how our congregation will be innovating Jewish learning. We invite your input as we take important steps towards providing the best learning experiences possible to our community. For more information, please contact [list name and contact information for a team member].

Roadmap



September – December 2011

PREPARE FOR INITIAL MODEL IMPLEMENTATION

- Adapt model materials as necessary
- Clarify learner outcomes and identify resources
- Design the learning and teaching experiences
- Build your behind-the-scenes infrastructure
- Consider leadership and implementation roles and responsibilities

DATA:	Adapt data collection tool to chosen model Collect pre-implementation data
SOCIAL CONNECTIONS:	Conduct “preview” session with connected families Mobilize connected families to invite others
COMMUNICATION:	Share families’ hopes and dreams and link to plans for the new model of learning
REFLECTION:	Reflect on decisions and new experiences; Identify implications for communication and next steps

January – March 2012

IMPLEMENT!

- Implement your model 3-5 times

DATA:	After each learning session: 1) Gather feedback from learners and “teachers”, 2) Gather and record tracking data
SOCIAL CONNECTIONS:	Continue to build relationships with connected families Mobilize social “connectors” to check-in with others
COMMUNICATION:	With the board and families, share specific successes to generate more successes and build expectations for continued innovation
REFLECTION:	Reflect on decisions and new experiences; identify implications for communication and next steps



April – June 2012

EVALUATE INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION AND DETERMINE NEXT STEPS

- Consider multiple ways to expand and intensify model
- Apply for grant to help achieve next steps

DATA: Collect post-implementation data
Review tracking data

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS: Continue to identify and mobilize additional social “connectors”
Continue to check-in for informal feedback

COMMUNICATION: Share with congregational leadership, families and “teachers” what has been learned and what is ahead
Garner approval to expand/intensify model

REFLECTION: Analyze data, reflect on decisions and new experiences; identify implications for communication and next steps

June 2012 and Forward

EXPAND AND INTENSIFY MODEL

- Develop action plan to expand and intensify new model
- Begin to implement action plan

DATA: Check that record keeping was complete
Consider what additional data would be beneficial

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS: Engage connected families in plans for coming year

COMMUNICATION: Share learnings and plans with board, families

REFLECTION: Reflect on decisions and new experiences; identify implications for communication and next steps
Begin shaping a comprehensive vision for learning

Commentary on the Express Innovation Roadmap

Prior to Orientation

Through use of an Appreciative Inquiry exercise, teams will identify their congregation's priority learning goal(s) and be able to describe when learning has been most successful. These insights will help guide the selection of an innovative model for Jewish learning that is most aligned to their goals and successes.

June 2011: Orientation

Teams from each **Express Innovation** congregation will meet together to learn more about the rationale and assumptions of **Express Innovation**. Teams will learn about a wide selection of innovative models of Jewish learning. Discussion will focus on how to understand the descriptions provided and what to consider when making a choice.

July - August 2011: Select a model and lay groundwork

Now is when **Express Innovation** begins to take off. The choice of a model that will build on your congregation's strengths and fulfill your congregation's priority learning goals is a critical decision that will generate energy and chart the direction for **Express Innovation** in your congregation. The "How Do We Decide?" worksheet lists criteria to consider when deciding which model is your best match. There is room on the worksheet to list additional criteria that are particular to your congregation. If you are creating a new model, develop a model template using the form provided. After you have made your choice, plan out a timeline and calendar for the year, including the monthly team meetings with your consultant.

The 4 Boosters of Express Innovation: At this point, your data collection will consist of keeping a record of your model selection rationale and familiarizing yourselves with the data collection tools you will have received at the Summer Institute. Invite connected families to meet to explore their hopes and dreams for their lives with an eye towards finding linkages between their wishes and the learning experiences you will create. Be sure to share your year-long calendar with key leadership, including your clergy, and to reserve meeting space for your meetings and the first sessions of your **Express Innovation** model. Before you move onto the next steps, reflect on the way you have been thinking about and preparing to make these

educational changes and allow yourself to dream about the long-term impact of this new model on your congregation.

September – December 2011: Prepare for initial model implementation

Planning for the initial implementation of your model involves constant decision-making and assembling many moving parts. If you have chosen to implement an existing model you can use its narrative description as your guide. If you have created a new model, use the model template you created. Materials are provided to help you 1) specify your target audience as well as the frequency and setting(s) of your learning sessions, 2) Design the learner and teacher/facilitator experiences, 3) build a behind-the-scenes infrastructure and 4) clarify leadership roles and responsibilities.

The 4 Boosters of Express Innovation: You will be provided a pre-implementation data collection tool to adapt and administer so you know how your participants were thinking and feeling prior to their participation in your new model of learning. You also will need to decide what kinds of tracking data about your participants will be useful. Conducting a “preview” session with connected families will get them (and you!) energized about what’s to come and will give them the first-hand **Express Innovation** experience that will excite them to invite others. Share with the congregation, especially the synagogue board and other families, your priority learning goal(s) and how your **Express Innovation** model will achieve them. Personal stories (told anonymously, if requested) can peak interest and inspire both participation and support. Allow time to step away from decision-making to reflect on how this planning process and the kinds of learning you are designing compare to what you are used to doing. Think about how your staffing and leadership needs are changing. Consider the future implications of these insights and how you can best communicate them to your congregation.

January – March 2012: Implement!

Begin the initial implementation of your model by having a minimum of 10% of your target population meet 3-5 times over the course of this three month period. Arriving at this implementation phase so quickly is a hallmark of **Express Innovation**. By engaging families in your new model for learning so quickly you soon will see its impact. Pay close attention to which aspects run smoothly and which need more attention. Be prepared to tweak your plans in response to feedback from families and teachers/facilitators. By being reassuring and responsive, yet staying on track, you can begin to develop a collaborative planning relationship with your participants.

The 4 Boosters of Express Innovation: A data collection tool will be provided to help you gather valuable feedback from learners and “teachers” after each learning session. Stay in close contact with the “connectors” and mobilize them to check-in with others. They can help you measure how things are going. Share your successes with the board and other families to keep the momentum going and build expectations for continued innovation. Reflect on what you accomplished and what you found the most satisfying, keeping in mind that your personal stories will touch others as well. And give yourselves pats on the back for daring to take this bold step and successfully bringing members of your community along with you!

April – June 2012: Evaluate initial implementation and determine next steps

With your initial implementation phase behind you, step back and reflect on what happened, what you accomplished and what you learned along the way so you can begin to imagine ways in which your model could grow into the future. Consider multiple possibilities and choose a direction (or several) with your priority learning goal(s) in sight. Determine your next steps and get the congregational support and the necessary funding to expand your successes with innovation.

The 4 Boosters of Express Innovation: In addition to formal post-implementation data collecting and analysis, review your tracking data. Continue to identify and mobilize additional social “connectors” and continue to check-in with them for informal feedback. They may have additional valuable insights several months after their experiences that could help you plan for the future. Share with the congregation’s leadership and all participants what has been learned and what you see in your future with **Express Innovation**. If you haven’t received it already, be sure to garner the necessary board approvals to expand and intensify your model. Sharing your data analysis with your leadership will provide the evidence they will want before fully committing to additional innovations.

June 201 and Forward: Develop action plan to expand and intensify model

Develop a planning process for an expanded and intensified phase of your model by following the **Express Innovation** protocol you used for the initial phase. Then get ready for your next phase of implementation. You can expect more challenges – and even more rewards – as you continue to engage families in your new model of meaningful Jewish learning.

The 4 Boosters of Express Innovation: Make sure your record keeping for this important first year is complete so you have documented the “whats” and “whys” of your decision-making. Consider what additional kinds of data would be helpful to measure the impact of your model on families and to make your case for ongoing congregational support. Include some of the connected families in your planning. Share future plans with the board and families. As you step back and survey all you have accomplished, reflect on the impact **Express Innovation** has had on your congregation and families and use those insights to begin shaping and articulating a comprehensive vision of Jewish learning to guide you into the future.