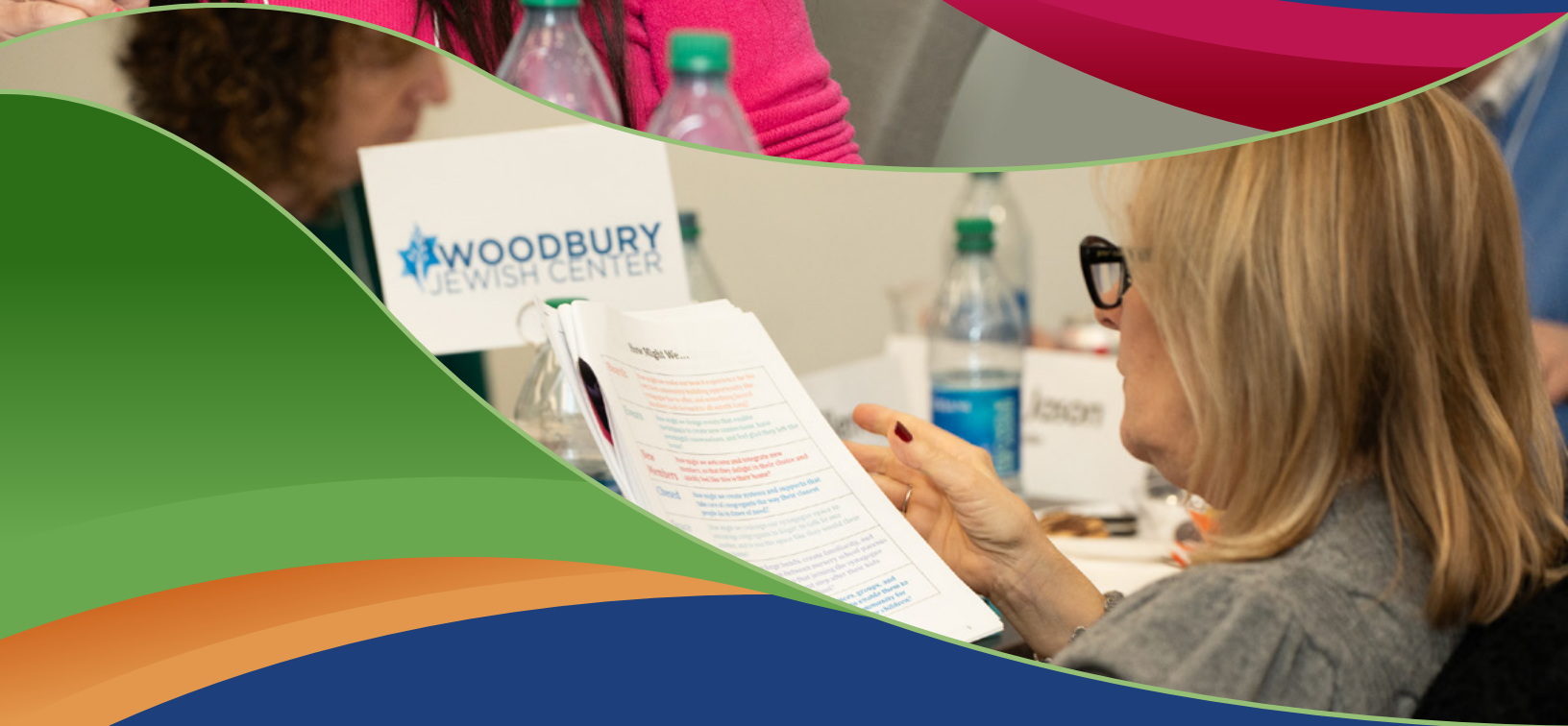


The Belonging Project

Impact on Participants
& Communities
2024



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Introduction

The Belonging Project came into being in the fall of 2021 through conversations between Clal and the Springtide Research Institute, a research center that studies faith and young adults. Springtide had conducted a study of young adults and loneliness, trying to understand whether attendance at religious community events impacted loneliness. It turned out that attendance had little impact. What reduced loneliness was the *relationships* formed there. Springtide developed three stages of belonging to describe the ways in which they saw young people relating to their faith communities. They also began developing a survey to measure belonging, using those stages of belonging, in Catholic schools.

At Clal, we immediately saw the potential for this work to apply to synagogue life. Could we harness the insight already begun by Springtide and both customize and elaborate on it for the synagogue setting? Thus The Belonging Project was born.

Working with Springtide, we created the Congregational Belonging Survey to measure belonging in synagogues – the factors that contributed to belonging, how congregants felt connected to or cared for by fellow community members, which program areas had the greatest impact on belonging, and the comparison of various congregational demographics' experience of belonging. We launched a pilot of the survey in the spring of 2022, with seven congregations spanning denominations, sizes, and geographies throughout the U.S. and Canada.

After incorporating feedback from our pilot cohort, we launched our full offerings for cohorts of synagogues in movements or Federation catchment areas, which included the Congregational Belonging Survey, our workshops teaching Jewish leaders how to design for belonging, and coaching as the project teams progressed through the process. There was

immediate interest. We had hit upon essential questions synagogues were asking themselves before 2020, and even more so in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. What are the essential factors that enable our congregants to feel that they belong in our community? What is the connection between congregants' relationships with each other and their willingness to contribute to building this congregation, financially and otherwise? Who is in most need of care and belonging in our community and who have we been missing? Could we design gatherings, institutional processes, and spaces to actually foster mutual support and friendship among our community members?

Since our pilot, 32 synagogues and 255 Jewish professional and lay leaders – including 37 clergy – have participated in The Belonging Project, spawning many dozens of new initiatives, programs, offerings, and approaches. What follows is a report based on two cohorts of The Belonging Project (15 synagogues and 96 individual leader participants) from 2023 to 2024. It explores The Belonging Project's major impacts on the participating Jewish leaders and synagogues, as well as points toward lessons for further success. [The Belonging Project](#) continues to grow and change: It is now available not only in cohorts but also to individual congregations in a variety of formats to match their needs. (See the final page of this report for more details.)

I've learned so much alongside these courageous and creative leaders and congregations, and I'm honored to have been able to accompany them in their work to design communities of belonging.



Rabbi Julia Appel

Senior Director of Innovation
Clal – The National Jewish Center
for Learning and Leadership

Executive Summary of The Belonging Project's Impact on Participants

What

An opportunity for synagogues to deepen congregants' sense of belonging and connection, through a Congregational Belonging Survey, rigorous training workshops, and individualized coaching.

Who

Clal - The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership ran The Belonging Project for two cohorts of 96 clergy, professionals, and lay leaders, across 15 synagogues in the United States between January 2023 and April 2024.

When

January, 2023 - April, 2024

90%

of participants
would recommend
the program to others

76%

of participants rated
their experience a
4 or 5 out of 5

“

I'm so thankful to have participated in this program. I'm forever indebted to all who had a hand in making it a reality!

”

In the following pages, we present five impact themes that emerged from feedback surveys and one-on-one conversations with participants. They are:

1. Mindset Shift:

Synagogues have undergone a significant mindset shift and now apply the lens of Belonging to most of what they do.

2. A New Framework:

The Four Stages of Belonging enabled synagogues to take a fresh look at how they build community and provided an actionable new framework through which synagogues could make change.

3. Adoption of Design Thinking:

Participants reported markedly increased comfort with design thinking.

4. Reimagining How the Community Gathers:

Participating synagogues didn't only create new programs for new audiences; they reimagined how the community gathers and how congregants interact.

5. Shifting How Leadership Operates:

Synagogues saw the greatest impact when they fully integrated the concepts of Designing for Belonging into the leadership structure of the synagogue.



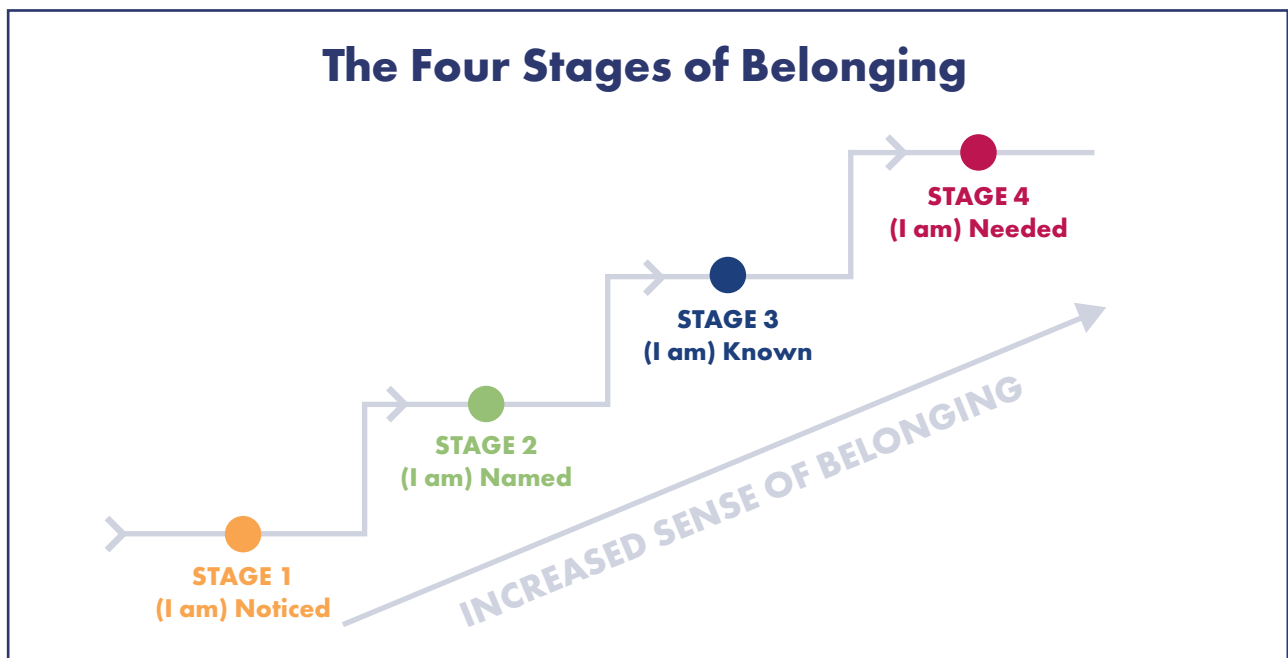
A New Approach to Belonging

The Belonging Project is rooted in two frameworks that Clal has synthesized into an integrated approach to designing for belonging outcomes in synagogue communities.

The Four Stages of Belonging

The first is the Four Stages of Belonging. In Springtide Research Institute’s 2020 report *Belonging: Reconnecting America’s Loneliest Generation*, they developed a three stage description of an individual’s process of creating a sense of belonging in community, based on their research on individuals in faith communities. Clal took this and expanded it. Based on the scholarship in the field of civic engagement and community organizing, Clal added a fourth stage to better describe how adults relate in multi-generational communities (“Needed”). We also translated the stages of belonging to accompanying actions that communal institutions can take to foster these stages of belonging, as described below.

Taken as a whole, the Four Stages of Belonging present a fresh framework through which to ensure that all congregants are finding what they need in our communities. Many synagogues currently do this in a shorthand way by asking, “Do we have programs for young families? Do we have programs for seniors? Do we have programs for teens?” Such an approach is based solely on age demographics and their corresponding programs – events, gatherings, and classes. The Four Stages of Belonging enables synagogues to look at so many other factors, both pertaining to the individual congregant and to the synagogue itself: Physical space. Registration forms. Marketing. Length of membership. Neighborhood. Physical ability. When leaders use the Four Stages of Belonging as their lens, they are able to notice so many more areas of synagogue life that they could address.



The Four Stages of Belonging are:

Noticed:

The first stage on the way to feeling a sense of belonging is simply being noticed. From an individual perspective, this measures whether a congregant feels seen on a basic level. Do I feel seen and acknowledged here? Do I trust I'm cared about here? Am I missed when I'm not around? Do I see people like me in this synagogue's marketing and do I feel there are offerings that address my needs and interests?

From the institutional perspective, this stage connects with how we greet people in our gatherings, how we onboard new members, our signage and physical space (including accommodations for various physical needs), our marketing and whether it shows the full diversity of our community. How might we better notice people and make them feel that we are thinking of *them*, specifically?

Named:

No one wants to feel invisible in a community they are part of. From an individual perspective, this stage measures whether a congregant feels people know who they are. Do community members greet me personally and do they remember my name? Does someone say hello to me and ask me questions about my life when I come here? Do I have friends here and at least one person I can trust?

From the institutional perspective, this stage connects with whether we commit to learning congregants' names and using them at every opportunity, how we design our offerings to enable congregants to learn each other's names, whether our programming includes opportunities to meet each other and not just hear from a person on the stage. How might we better call each congregant by name and help them get to know each other?



Known:

The groups in which we feel we belong the most are the ones in which we can be our more authentic selves, and in which fellow community members want to learn who we truly are. From an individual perspective, this stage measures whether congregants feel known on a deeper level. Do I feel safe being my full self and sharing things about my life with others in this synagogue? Do I feel I can disagree with others and still remain in the community, or is this a place full of judgment? Are community members supportive of me during hard times?

From an institutional perspective, this stage connects with the way we provide opportunities for deeper sharing and relationship-building, the number of ongoing small groups we have, the frequency of meaningful connection with clergy, and how we practice respectful disagreement. How might we better enable congregants to share their full selves without fear and to trust that they are known deeply enough to find support in the community?

Needed:

When people contribute to building their community, they gain a sense of ownership and investment in its success, and in turn they feel they are part of the “we” that makes the community function. From an individual perspective, this stage measures whether congregants feel their unique contributions of time, talent, and treasure are needed by the community, and whether they are in fact rolling up their sleeves to build community. Do I take action to support a fellow community member I’m not friends with? Do I myself greet others and ask them about their lives when I see them? Do I say “we” rather than “they” when I talk about the synagogue?

From an institutional perspective, this stage measures whether we truly harness the giving power of our people, enable them to contribute their unique gifts side-by-side with staff and lay leaders, and offer a diversified volunteer menu (instead of just the option of joining the board). How might we shift our mindset from *servicing* congregants to *co-creating community* with them, with each person having a role tailored to their skills?

When we assess our synagogues and Jewish institutions using the Four Stages of Belonging, new insights and opportunities emerge, sparking creativity and more precise and effective plans of action.

Design Thinking

The second framework on which The Belonging Project is built is design thinking, otherwise known as user-centered design. This is an approach borrowed from the product design world. The basic premise in that context is that if you are creating a new product, you don't just sit in a conference room and make it up yourself. You first need to understand the user's experience that the product is intended to improve, which you might do with focus groups or one-on-one interviews. Only after talking with potential users to better understand their needs do you brainstorm what kind of product would be best, try out some prototypes, test them with likely customers, and improve the product until it's ready for production.

The same is true in social services and community settings, although we must translate the steps for our setting. We are not selling a product; we are enhancing lives and the world through Jewish community and Jewish living. Issues arise when synagogue leaders believe they are in the sales business, either selling Judaism or selling paid synagogue membership.

At Clal, when we apply design thinking to Jewish communal life, what we are doing is inverting that assumption. Instead of asking "How can we make people need what we are offering?" we need to ask "How can we offer what people need?"

In The Belonging Project, we combine design thinking with our Four Stages of Belonging to help congregations understand how to Design for Belonging. After teaching participants the Four Stages of Belonging, we teach them the steps in design thinking as applied to belonging:

- How to identify groups feeling less belonging and interview them one-on-one to understand their needs
- How to define those interviewees' needs, in their own words
- How to brainstorm potential offerings to address those needs
- How to create a basic prototype to test the idea.
- Finally, how to implement – creating a next, bigger version of the idea, by incorporating all the best user feedback from the prototype

The above approach – combining the Four Stages of Belonging with design thinking – creates significant mindset shifts for participants, as they learn how to co-create Jewish community with community members and how to focus their work on what congregants say they want and need.

Report Methodology

This report details the impact of The Belonging Project on two cohorts from 2023 to 2024, with 96 participants from 15 different synagogues. We focused on these two cohorts because they contained a variety of synagogue sizes, had standard teams of 4-6 leaders, and all participated in all three aspects of The Belonging Project: the Congregational Belonging Survey, the workshops, and the coaching. The first cohort was created for the Union of Reform Judaism (URJ) – the Reform movement) and offered to member congregations from January 2023 through June 2023. The second cohort was created for the United Jewish Appeal-Federation of New York (UJA) from August 2023 through April 2024.

To evaluate the impact of The Belonging Project, we employed a mixed-methods approach. Clal administered post-project surveys to capture participant feedback, with 10 out of 46 participants in the URJ Cohort completing the survey (a 22% response rate) and 11 out of 50 participants in the UJA Cohort completing the survey (also a 22% response rate).

For a more in-depth understanding of the URJ cohort’s experience, we conducted interviews with six participants in early December 2023. We followed the same methodology with six participants from the UJA cohort in the spring of 2024. These interviews focused on participants’ experiences with The Belonging Project, to understand the program’s impact, success, and overall results. Participants shared what they learned, changes in their approach to Jewish community engagement, and any programmatic or process changes in their synagogues. The main themes identified from these interviews are presented in this report, providing a comprehensive overview of the project’s impact and outcomes.



Five Impact Themes

As a result of The Belonging Project, the vast majority of participants increased their confidence in creating a culture of belonging in their synagogue communities.

Theme 1: Mindset Shift

Synagogues have undergone a significant mindset shift and now apply the lens of Belonging to most of what they do.

“It was eye-opening that not everybody felt welcomed at synagogue the way we do, and we got to hear why. We realize we have to shift if we want to continue being the synagogue we are.”

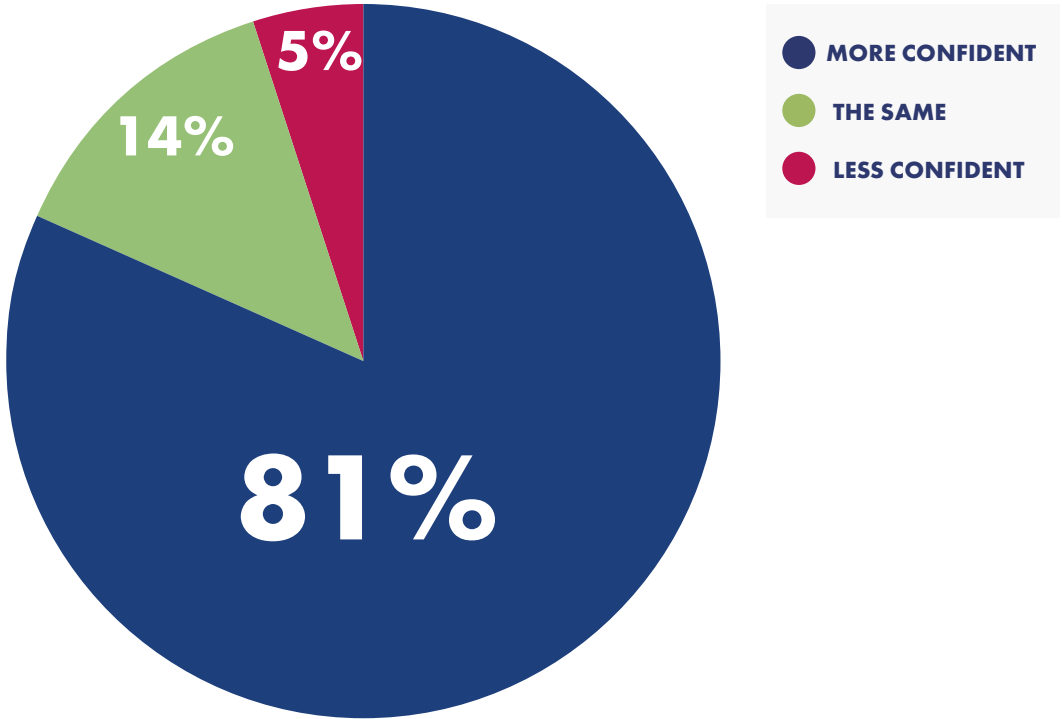
The overall mindset shift of participants was significant. We found that the broadest impact from this work was that synagogue leaders (1) have a renewed sense of optimism about the future of synagogue life, (2) now center the concept of belonging more in their thinking, and (3) have better language to speak about the belonging experience. Synagogues are actively thinking about these concepts and have the language needed to foster deeper inclusivity.

The increase in optimism was clear. Synagogues have reported feeling rejuvenated after participating in The Belonging Project training. They feel they have more tools available than they previously thought and that there are so many new possibilities for impacting communal connection. One participant shared following a workshop, “I have a sense of optimism about our shul and about our global Jewish world. Change feels less scary and more exciting.”

Participants now more clearly understand that creating belonging is intentional and requires work. As one participant shared, “[We] have to design for belonging. Not just think about it and expect it to happen.” This work has shifted lay leaders’ mindsets about successful synagogue life away from desiring numerous programs with high attendance, toward desiring intentional programming where people genuinely want to be and feel included. Many participants referenced attempts at personal invitations and smaller gatherings as a way to increase intimacy. For example, a small group of people in the 50-65 age cohort were personally invited to a Rabbi’s home for dinner and a curated experience. Those invited felt seen, valued, and more connected to the synagogue, appreciating the personal touch and intentionality behind the invitation. Participants shared with us their desire to shift toward more of these smaller types of gatherings, which more impactfully create belonging than large, impersonal events. Furthermore, based on the survey, 81%

of survey respondents increased their confidence in articulating how belonging currently operates in their synagogue. This demonstrates that more folks are aware of the areas of strength in their belonging efforts and where there is room for improvement. Having gone through the program, they understand the importance of having language for what can otherwise be dismissed as intangibles.

As a result of their experience in The Belonging Project, participants felt more confident describing how belonging currently operates in their synagogue community.



A concrete example: From interviews, we heard that as a result of The Belonging Project, synagogues are more sensitive to the experiences of new members, prioritizing them feeling welcome and included. For example, they mentioned reaching out to young families who may not have time for evening programs, adjusting programming schedules and formats to meet their needs, and sometimes switching the day and time of the Hebrew School classes to accommodate their desires. Also, they've made more of an effort to invite new members to participate in volunteer roles aligned with their interests, making them feel valued and integral to the community. The realization that new members are eager to be involved and help, if warmly invited, has been transformative and is part of this mindset shift towards increasing belonging for new members.

Theme 2: A New Framework

The Four Stages of Belonging enabled synagogues to take a fresh look at how they build community and provided an actionable new framework through which synagogues could make change.

“I’ve known about relational Judaism for some time, but the Four Stages [of Belonging] were totally new to me. It resonates and helps deepen our focus on what we’re trying to do! It’s very powerful.”

Through the curriculum, participants learned a new way to understand belonging through the Four Stages of Belonging, outlined above.

We heard from survey feedback and interviews that the project reinforced participants’ gut feeling and intuition. It took concepts that made sense intuitively and broke them down into actionable steps participants could work on and make progress towards. Participants now had shared language to express and articulate some of these intuitive concepts, as well as categories in which to take action.

“The Belonging Project found a really great way to provide information that most people are thinking about, but don’t have the language for or the resources to guide them in the right direction.”

A few examples from each of the stages of belonging:

Noticed: At events, some synagogues instituted “belonging ambassadors” – lay leaders interspersed around events to encourage mingling if certain people are not being engaged organically or to welcome new and unfamiliar faces. Others mentioned that they increased their buffet style events instead of sit-down so people are moving around and having more opportunities to converse with different people during events. These ambassadors are sometimes members of the belonging project committee or, better yet, people tapped by the committee.

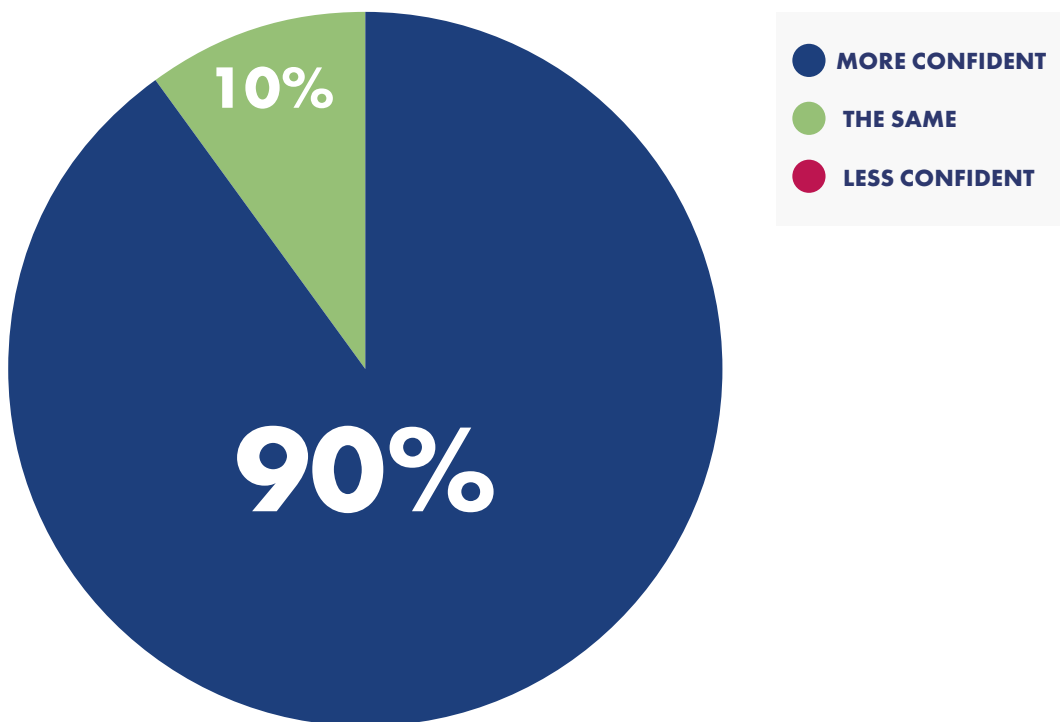
Named: Many shared that they are now including name tags for all events and programs. This way people are more comfortable to go up to people they have met before but whose names they can't remember. Some are reusable name tags, others have icebreaker prompts on them to spark conversations. Many referenced personal invitations as important ways to make people feel that their presence mattered. They now spend time calling people in advance of events asking them to join personally. Another synagogue made centerpiece collages that were all beautiful and different. The committee encouraged people to walk around the room to see the different unique pieces and to talk to three new people they hadn't met before. This helped foster meeting new people in a fun, natural way. One synagogue shared that they used to have open buffets, which had the problem of people at the front taking too much, but now they station Belonging volunteers to serve food because it also means getting to have more conversations among participants.

Known: A number of congregations created topic-based “chavurah” small groups, allowing members to connect over shared interests such as physical activity, life stage, and culture, in an ongoing and regular way. These small groups could be lay-led or staff-led, but often were initiated due to congregant volunteers. This kind of effort enabled group members to get to know each other deeper, forming relationships over time. Another effort was that one synagogue created an intergenerational podcast that they then featured as their newsletter's “belonging column.” The column features two people interacting: one who's been a member for many years and one who's been at the synagogue for under a year. They believe this has helped people connect and feel like they belong to the larger community.

Needed: Some synagogues used to not invite new members into planning programs, because they considered it easier to do it themselves and didn't want to burden new members. However, following The Belonging Project, they've realized that synagogues are more inviting with more volunteers, moving away from siloed approaches and embracing collective volunteerism. Leaders are shifting from the perception that it is easier to do work themselves, to realizing the synagogue will be better off if more people are included earlier on in the process. Committees now are asking for volunteers and the volunteers feel really good about being asked. Synagogue leaders recognize it is important that members' personal skills are tracked. One synagogue is working to create a "relevant skills" portal that enables members to share their different expertises to benefit the synagogue community. As we heard from the feedback survey, "The 'needed' component of belonging is transformational and is a win-win for members and synagogues."

The Belonging Project not only taught the Four Stages of Belonging; it also enabled participants to teach the approach to others, bringing additional leaders into the conversation in their congregations. After the workshops, 90% of survey respondents reported feeling more confident in their ability to teach someone else what makes a congregant feel that they belong in a community, not only to incorporate the concepts into their own leadership.

As a result of their experience in The Belonging Project, participants felt more confident teaching others about what makes someone feel they belong.



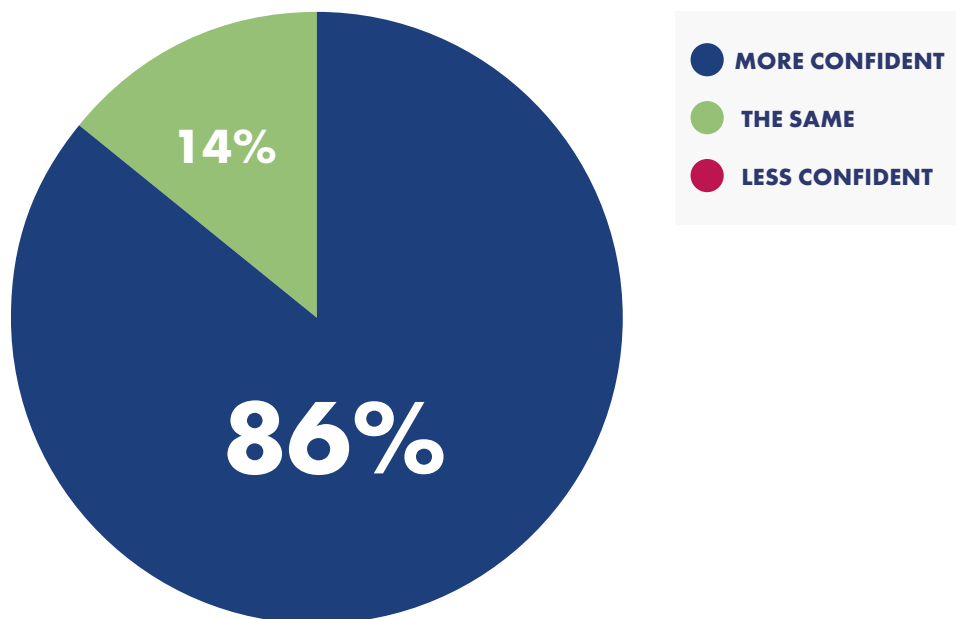
Theme 3: Adoption of Design Thinking

Participants reported markedly increased comfort with design thinking.

From both the interviews and survey data, it is evident that synagogues have become more aware of and have internalized design thinking approaches. Participants are now more comfortable with the various components – such as empathy interviews, prototyping, and running pilots, and are applying them to creating strategic organizational change within their synagogues.

“I think The Belonging Project taught me to thoughtfully go from step A to B to C, etc. I think prior to this I would have jumped from A to C or D and had less impact. I am now more strategic, more aware of statistics, and perhaps more patient in trying to reach my goals.”

As a result of their experience in The Belonging Project, participants felt more confident assessing members’ belonging needs through empathy interviews and feedback.



Interviews with program participants frequently referenced their increased comfort in conducting empathy interviews and creating pilot initiatives in their synagogues. Numerous synagogues shared that a major takeaway from the project was being more open-minded and curious when interviewing congregants. Some participants anticipate conducting these empathy interviews with additional demographic audiences that need attention, whereas others expressed a desire to dig deeper into the same demographic audiences to expand on their learnings by hearing from more members.

Either way, there is greater ease and recognition of the importance of digging into the user experience, in a way that may not always be easy and exactly what one “wants to hear.” Overall, participants were able to successfully put the design thinking methodology into action and saw the value in orienting themselves toward understanding congregants’ needs and experiences.



Theme 4: Reimagining How the Community Gathers

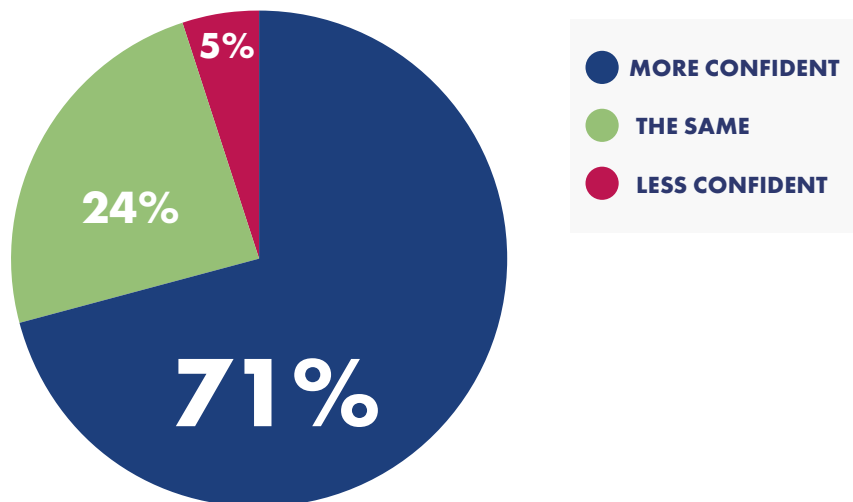
Participating synagogues didn't only create new programs for new audiences; they reimagined how the community gathers and how congregants interact.

Through the interviews, we heard from synagogues that they now feel more confident designing programs that will facilitate more community member interaction. Synagogues recognize that increasing the number of programs and events will not in-and-of-itself create deeper belonging, but changing the way they approach the gatherings could.

"It is vital people feel like they have places where they belong and that's really what we're here to provide. [We're not just] a place for somebody to pray sometimes or to donate their old books. We're really trying to build community, where people feel like they are authentically a part of it. I think that [The Belonging Project] helps give the toolkit for that."

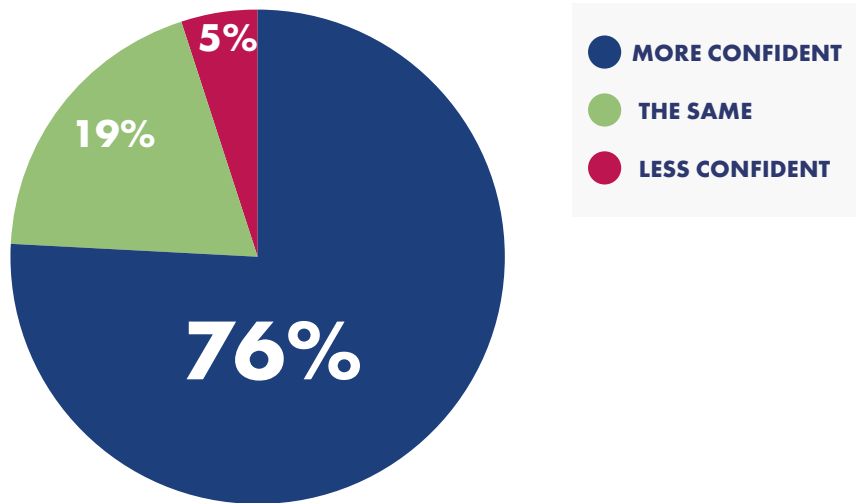
Also, synagogues are showing they value data-informed decision-making, utilizing the Congregational Belonging Survey results as a north star for where to focus their programming efforts. As a result of participating in the program, 71% stated they were now able to identify concrete next action steps that would increase congregations' sense of belonging.

As a result of their experience in The Belonging Project, participants felt more confident identifying concrete next action steps that would increase their congregation's sense of belonging.



After the workshops, 76% of survey respondents reported feeling more confident in their ability to design programs, offerings, processes, and/or spaces that focus on deepening belonging and connection as a result of their experience with The Belonging Project.

As a result of their experience in The Belonging Project, participants felt more confident designing programs, offerings, processes and/or spaces that focus on deeper belonging.



Synagogues shared that they deeply benefited from how The Belonging Project encouraged them to be intentional in the “behind the scenes” aspects of programs that they previously wouldn’t have spent much time thinking about. As an example, some synagogues have made adjustments to how tables and chairs are arranged, to encourage more mingling at events. Some replaced traditional tables with high-top tables, compelling members to move around the room to get food and engage in more conversations with people they might not have previously connected with. Others tried adding tables and chairs at kiddush, when usually it was standing-only, which allowed members to shmooze longer, providing more moments of connection. One synagogue started having lay leaders check in participants when arriving at an event, to encourage conversation and connection between lay leaders and fellow congregants.

These structural design changes in events and interactions reflect the project’s emphasis on building a community centered around belonging. By embedding these practices and attitudes, synagogues are cultivating an environment where members feel more connected and supported, thus fostering a stronger and more vibrant community.

Theme 5: Shifting How Leadership Operates

Synagogues saw the greatest impact when they fully integrated the concepts of Designing for Belonging into the leadership structure of the synagogue.

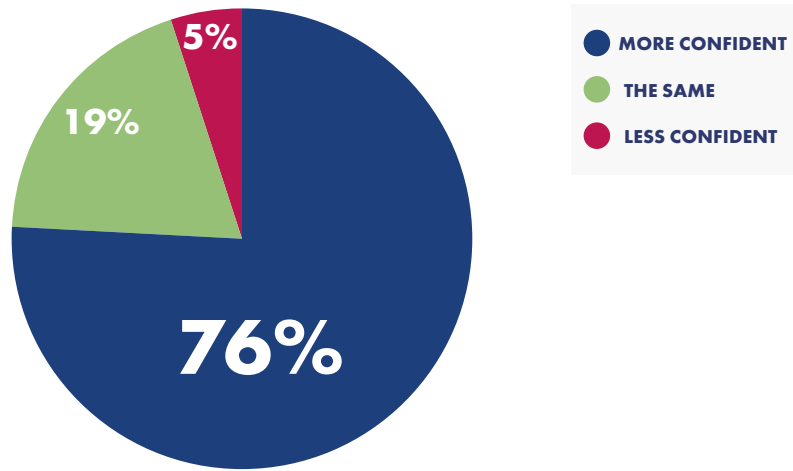
“Having the language and expertise and authority and resources behind you makes it a much easier road to travel down than one lone professional or couple of lay leaders focused on organizational change.”

We found that synagogues that integrated The Belonging Project into their board of directors and leadership structures experienced more impactful results. When the project was managed by an individual or a small group not fully integrated into the broader synagogue activities, participants reported challenges in driving adoption and making significant changes. In contrast, synagogues that embraced Designing for Belonging as a central element of their strategic planning, with the entire board educated in the methodology, saw more profound and widespread impacts.

Many shared they are working on updating their board structure with a formal belonging committee, and after the training, there is consensus that they want to bring more formal training to more synagogue leaders. Others changed their board structures to place belonging at its center. One synagogue's rabbi pinned the Four Stages of Belonging to his bulletin board right next to his computer, so he could always keep the concept in mind.

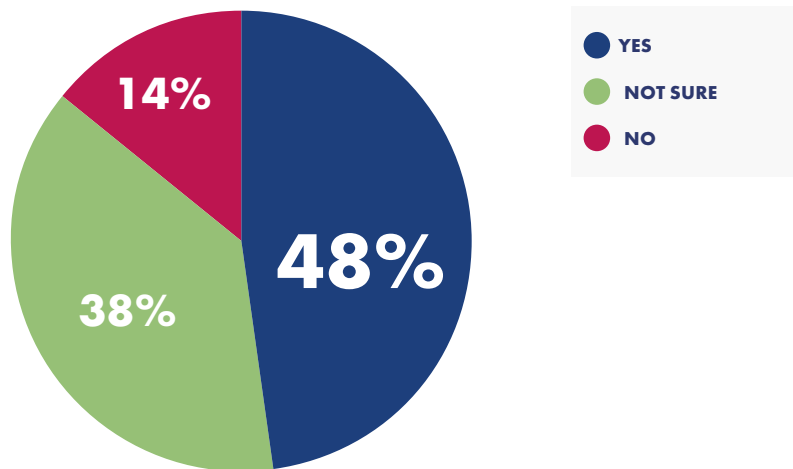
A few synagogues incorporated what they learned in The Belonging Project into their new strategic plans, including measuring congregants' feeling of belonging more regularly, leading to a positive ripple effect throughout the synagogue. Many synagogues dedicated board meetings to training their board on what they learned in The Belonging Project. In fact, 76% of respondents reported that they feel more confident motivating their synagogue to do things differently.

As a result of their experience in The Belonging Project, participants felt more confident motivating their synagogue to do things differently.



Almost 50% of participants reported that they had carried insights from The Belonging Project forward to their board, saying that their board was now more supportive of efforts to increase congregants' sense of belonging, even dedicating synagogue resources to the effort.

Do you feel your congregation's board is more supportive of efforts to increase congregants' sense of belonging, including dedicating staff time and financial resources, than before The Belonging Project?



By embedding The Belonging Project within the strategic framework and leadership training of the synagogue, these communities were able to foster a deeper, more sustainable sense of belonging among their members.

Key Recommendations for Synagogues

To maximize the impact of The Belonging Project within communities, synagogues are encouraged to adopt the following key recommendations:

1. Utilize a Belonging Lens:

- Designing for belonging is effective not only for maintaining satisfaction among existing members, but also for attracting new members. Synagogues can leverage this approach to bolster their membership and create a more inclusive environment.

2. Apply the Four Stages of Belonging Framework:

- The Four Stages of Belonging have proven to be beneficial. Synagogues should integrate this framework into their operations to enhance members' sense of belonging and community.

3. Incorporate Design Thinking Skills:

- Design thinking has been a valuable skill set for synagogue leaders. By embracing this methodology, leaders can develop innovative solutions tailored to the specific needs of their congregations.

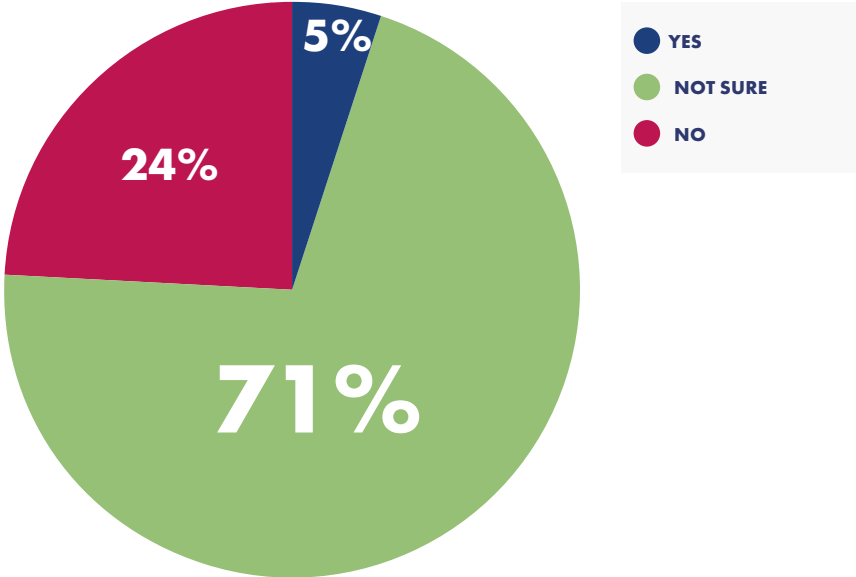
4. Integrate Belonging Initiatives Holistically with the Board:

- To ensure lasting impact, synagogues should embed belonging initiatives within their broader board activities, rather than treating them as separate side projects. This holistic integration can foster a more cohesive and sustained effort towards enhancing community belonging.

5. Allocate Funding for Belonging Pilots and Experiments:

- Setting aside dedicated funding for belonging initiatives is crucial for their success. Individual synagogues or sponsoring institutions could provide micro-grants to support these efforts. Financial support enables the execution of pilots and experiments that can significantly enhance the sense of belonging among congregants.
- Currently, 95% (20 out of 21) of the survey respondents do not, or are not sure if they, have a budget allocated for increasing congregants' sense of belonging. Addressing this gap is essential for actualizing the potential of the belonging framework and building on the foundation laid by The Belonging Project.

Does your congregation currently have a budget committed to increasing congregants' sense of belonging?



By adopting these recommendations, synagogues can effectively leverage the insights gained in The Belonging Project to create more inclusive, engaged, and thriving communities.



Conclusion

The URJ and UJA cohorts trained by The Belonging Project between 2023 and 2024, with 96 professionals and lay leaders across 15 synagogues, experienced profound impacts as a result of their learning.

The Congregational Belonging Survey results provided them new information about their members, giving them insights into the specific needs and preferences of their congregations. This data enabled the synagogues to identify which cohorts within their communities required more focused attention and support, which helped them shift their mindset to focus on those who don't experience the kind of deep connection they do. The idea that one can design offerings for an outcome of greater connection and belonging was profound for participants.

By fostering a culture of inclusivity and engagement through the Four Stages of Belonging, The Belonging Project has laid a strong foundation for continuous improvement and community building within these synagogues. This new framework has brought specificity and clarity to leaders' work.

The Belonging Workshops also taught leaders tangible design thinking skills, which empowered them to develop and implement innovative solutions to enhance the sense of belonging among their members. These skills are not only valuable for addressing the current challenges; they also equip leaders to proactively identify and tackle future areas of opportunity.

The design approach also enabled synagogues to reimagine how their communities gather – not only the program topics, but the spaces, set-ups, and processes that create communal activities.

Finally, The Belonging Project highlighted for participants that change has to be systemic, not only episodic. The greater the number of synagogue leaders who learn to Design for Belonging, the greater the viability of new approaches and the greater the long-term impact.

The Belonging Project has demonstrated that with the right tools and approach, synagogue leaders can make significant improvements in creating more engaged and connected congregations.

"I think The Belonging Project is a vital exercise for synagogues to continue to keep their doors open!"

"A community is the place where they know your name and where they miss you when you are not there."

- Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l

What if we put belonging at the heart of Jewish communal life?



THIS IS THE BELONGING PROJECT – A CUTTING EDGE INITIATIVE THAT MERGES SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH, RELATIONAL BEST PRACTICES, AND ANCIENT JEWISH WISDOM.

Are you looking to create a community of care and deepen your congregants' sense of belonging and connection? After running three national cohorts with over 30 synagogues, and compiling tens of thousands of data points, Clal is bringing the Belonging Project directly to congregations for the first time.

We offer four options for bringing the Belonging Project to your synagogue:



Belonging 101 Workshop

Who is this for? Congregations beginning to focus on building a community of belonging. Leaders who want to spark interest in the idea of designing for belonging.

- 1.5 hour virtual workshop
- \$1000



Half-Day Retreat

Who is this for? Congregations seeking guiding principles of designing for belonging and connection among congregants, as well as opportunities for brainstorming and reflection as a leadership team. Communities with a leadership team ready to take next steps with the information learned.

- Half-day, in-person leadership retreat
- \$4500 plus travel and accommodations



Survey Package

Who is this for? Congregations that want to better understand their current belonging strengths and weaknesses and to receive customized, data-based recommendations for action steps.

- Belonging 101 Workshop (1.5 hours)
- Belonging Index survey with three week window for responses, including custom congregational link and QR code
- Survey strategy session, to maximize responses (1 hour)
- Full report on your data, including overall responses, demographic cross-sections, and action suggestions
- Debriefing session explaining insights from the data and suggested next steps (1 hour)
- \$5000



Congregational Leadership Cohort

Who is this for? Congregations that are ready to devote the next year to seriously impacting the experience of your congregants, the direction of your synagogue, and the culture of your community.

- Belonging 101 Workshop (1.5 hours)
- Survey Package
- 2 in-person, half-day workshops
- 5 coaching sessions
- \$16,000 plus travel and accommodations

CONTACT US

To find out more, please fill out [this short interest form](#) and [Rabbi Julia Appel](#) will reach out to you to discuss.



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www.clal.org/belonging

