

**Two Years of Transformation
Spark Impact Report
2017 - 2019**

**Without innovation
there is no tradition:**
Clal's Spark Fellowship
and the transformation of
Jewish legacy institutions

What if our legacy organizations adopted a growth mindset and a culture of innovation rather than forcing Jewish community to look as it did 50 or 100 years ago?

Adina Frydman
Executive Director, Community Resources, UJA-Federation of New York // Spark Fellowship Funding Partner

Spark came along at just the right time for us...We found that Spark offered us a roadmap for our journey of institutional transformation that was truly liberating.

Spark Fellowship Participant

The time is now to put people before programs.

Over a century ago, Rav Avraham Kook declared that the “old shall be made new, and the new made holy.” In today’s Jewish landscape, we have answered the latter part of that call loudly and clearly. Thanks to visionary projects like The Open Dor Project, the Jewish Emergent Network, Kenissa, Glean Network, and so many others that support emerging Jewish leaders and communities, these new models of gathering and meaning-making are, indeed, profoundly holy.

But what if our focus on the emergent has caused us to miss the incredible opportunity ahead for the ancient? What if - in our infatuation with innovation and entrepreneurship - we have cast aside the legacy institutions that brought us here? What if the old is begging to be made new, and we’ve ignored its beckoning call as we’ve become enraptured by the new?

Two years into the Spark Fellowship, we have worked with 15 institutions and 75 fellows, all of whom are committed to answering the call of making the old new. Each cohort began their year-long fellowship by taking serious and honest stock of their institutions, building diverse teams, and making a commitment to embracing innovation and design tools, abundance and growth mindsets, and the belief that - in this moment of profound change and disruption - anything is possible.

As Spark Fellowship moves into new cities, a self-guided online toolkit, and a coaching platform for on-going support, our humble aspiration is to continue to equip today’s leaders with the mindsets, skills, and tools to not only reimagine the “old” (i.e. traditional institutions) in light of today’s realities, but to experience this process of reimagination as a new kind of holy, in and of itself.

In faith, Rabbi Elan Babchuck



Rabbi Elan Babchuck
Founding Director, Spark
Director of Innovation, Clal 

Spark Fellowship: a proven impact model to transform the culture and innovate the business model of Jewish institutions.



What if we looked at every tradition in Jewish history as an innovation that made it? Would it give us enough courage, hope, and chutzpah to imagine the innovations of today as the traditions of tomorrow?

Two years into the Spark Fellowship these two questions continue to push us to think differently about our history, our future, and - most importantly - what's possible for today's Jewish leaders and institutions.

Rabbi Elan Babchuck
Founding Director, Spark
Director of Innovation, Clal



Spark is addressing a large gap in the educational and professional development experience of Jewish leaders.

Who

For leadership teams at Jewish organizations, including synagogues and JCCs, who seek to integrate a culture of innovation into their legacy institution. (Synagogue core teams must include at least one member of the clergy and two lay people. Non-synagogue organizations must include an Executive Director and two lay leaders.)

What

An 8-month learning-and-doing Fellowship that equips Jewish leadership teams with the tools, mindsets, and structure through which institutions can initiate and sustain change without losing their identity.



How

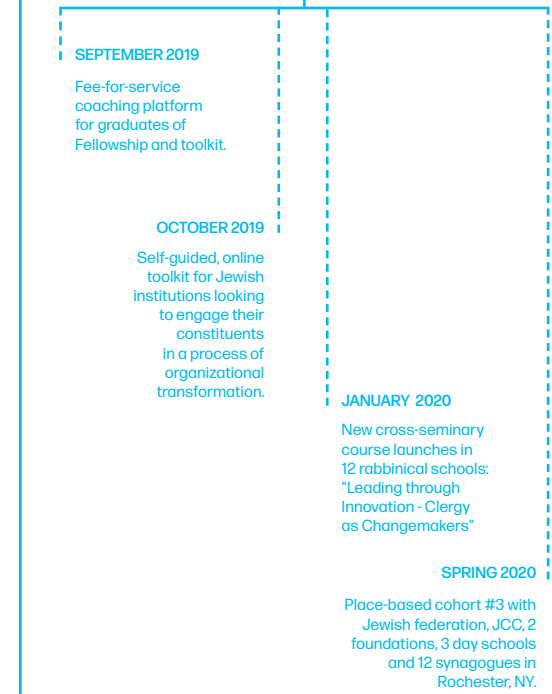
SPARK is a program of Clal: The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership and is taught by Clal and Glean Network staff and affiliated faculty. Spark is made possible by support from UJA Federation of New York.

As a result, Fellows are more confident in their abilities to...



"Spark helps Jewish professionals and lay leaders break down the anxiety they are all feeling about member engagement in a systematic way."

Cyd Weissman, Reconstructing Judaism.



Our impact, by the numbers:

Participant Demographics

75 Fellows **15** Teams **3** Cohorts

50% Professionals **50%** Lay leader

Community center **20%**

House of worship **80%**

88% Have not come across similar professional development experience

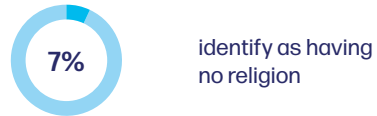
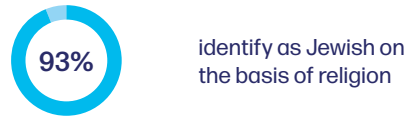
Our Impact

	 Institutions	 Innovations	 Leaders	 Distributed in innovation	 Individuals Impacted
2019 CURRENT	15	30	70	\$85K	2,500+
2020 PROJECTED	120	180	600	\$150K	15,000+

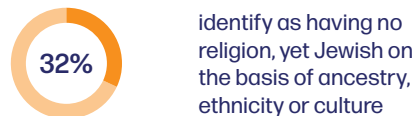
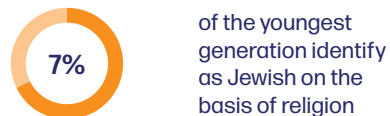
The American religious landscape is in the midst of an historic shift. Spark addresses that shift by transforming institutions.

Demographic shifts, generational differences, world events, and the untamed nature of technology are changing the way Jews perceive, respect, and engage with religious and cultural tradition.

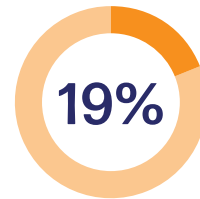
Greatest Generation



Millenials



Though **94%** of Jews are proud to be Jewish, only **31%** affiliate with a Jewish institution.



40% of Orthodox have become Conservative or Reform

30% of Conservative have become Reform

28% of Reform have left the ranks of Jews by religion entirely

Christianity **11%↓** population drop in last 15 years

Catholicism  **300+** congregations expected to close by 2030

Islam **69%** pursue spiritual life outside of the mosque

52% say that traditional understandings of Islam need new interpretation

No Religion  fastest growing religious segment in America; tripled in size since 1990

Yet, the timeless needs once fulfilled through faith - Meaning-Making, Belonging, and Pursuit of Justice - remain largely the same, and according to the data, largely unmet.

Americans are struggling to understand each other, and themselves.

Cultural Intolerance

64%

Americans say Jews face some discrimination, a 20-percentage-point increase from 2016.

11% ↑

Up from 13% in 2016, today 24% of Americans believe that Jews face a lot of discrimination.

60% ↑

in anti-Semitic incidents between 2016-2017.

32%

of Americans report online harassment was a result of their sexual orientation, religion, race or ethnicity, gender identity, or disability.

Crimes

White supremacists have killed more people in recent years than any other type of domestic extremism.

Political Division

85%

of Americans say that political debate has become more negative and less respectful.

Economic Gaps

9X

Top earning 10% average 9X the income of bottom 90%.

64%

of U.S. adults believe Americans' trust in each other has been shrinking, and "many ascribe shrinking to apolitical culture they believe is broken and spawns suspicion, even cynicism, about the ability of others to distinguish fact from fiction.

43.5%

of the total population are poor or low-income.

Public Health Concerns

47,000

Americans died as a result of an opioid overdose in 2017.

20%

of patients prescribed opioids for chronic pain misuse them.

Opioid Crisis

Gun Violence

58%

of American adults or someone they care for have experienced gun violence in their lifetime.



Firearms are the second leading cause of death for American children and teens.

Mental Illness

30% ↑

in suicide rate over the last 15 years, and sharp rise in depression amongst adolescents.



1 in 5 adults in the U.S. experience mental illness.



2/3 of gun deaths are suicides. The U.S. gun suicide rate is 10 times that of other high-income countries.

Loneliness and Social Isolation



Americans feel lonely



As damaging to health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day



Americans feel their social relationships are not meaningful

"The future is uncertain and religious leaders need to be able to lead through the uncertainty, and develop vision, alongside other faith and secular leaders and everyday people, for what the future of religion will look like." **Rabbi Stephanie Ruskay**, The Jewish Theological Seminary // Spark Advisor

These trends have pushed Jewish communal leaders to reflect on their roles as conveners and teachers, and identify new ways to deliver value to their increasingly diverse constituencies.

How can Jewish leaders be a greater resource to their congregants, younger generations, the unaffiliated and those who live in their shared communities?



ABOUT

We offer Jewish leaders a common language through which to articulate their ideas for intrapreneurial change.

Spark Fellowship is the answer to a simple question: **What if we took everything we've learned from the thriving Jewish innovation sector and applied those learnings to legacy institutions with the assets, motivation and talent to reinvent themselves?**

In 2017, as the Jewish community's attention was captivated by well-funded, national initiatives to support entrepreneurship (like the Jewish Emergent Network and Open Dor), we went the other way. Back to our founding institutions. Back to our roots. And back to our shared commitment to design Jewish life around the real needs of today's communities.

Two years and fifteen transformed institutions later, the answer to our founding "What if" question has inspired us all. The result? A brighter future for our institutions, deeper connections across our communities, and flourishing leadership teams re-energized for the work ahead.

Together, we invest in the reimagination of our Jewish traditions and communal spaces because of the unique power that faith-rooted experiences have to facilitate:

Meaning

Source of meaning-making and purpose-finding for youth and adults seeking activity and community.

Belonging

Camaraderie and opportunity for new face-to-face relationship development during different phases of life.

Justice

Friendship and allyship built around common goals and values, including, love, compassion, justice, personal transformation and collective action.

Spark's approach to capacity-building targets individuals, legacy institutions, and new ventures.

Impact model:



A group of people are seated around a table in a meeting room, engaged in conversation. The background features a large wall covered with numerous colorful sticky notes, suggesting a collaborative brainstorming session. The scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent orange filter.

"Every tradition is just an innovation that made it."

Rabbi Irwin Kula, Clal

"Our work privileges neither tradition nor innovation. We simply invite participants to experience them as being in sacred conversation with one another. Every project or leader that we've supported, and that's been written about here, has been both deeply traditional and profoundly innovative. And in this moment of change and tumult both in religion and in broader society, we believe that the world is yearning for bold, rooted, creative leadership more than ever before."

Rabbi Elan Babchuck, Founder, Spark Fellowship / Glean Network

Spark is addressing a large gap in the educational and professional development experience of Jewish leaders.



Who

For leadership teams at Jewish organizations, including synagogues and JCCs, who seek to integrate a culture of innovation into their legacy institution. (Synagogue core teams must include at least one member of the clergy and two lay people. Non-synagogue organizations must include an Executive Director and two lay leaders.)

What

An 8-month learning-and-doing Fellowship that equips Jewish leadership teams with the tools, mindsets, and structure through which institutions can initiate and sustain change without losing their identity.



When

The second cohort concluded in September 2019.

Where

Three in-person gatherings, ongoing coaching, access to grant dollars to fund implementation, and approximately 2-hours of weekly reading.

Spark Fellowship

Participant demographics:

- 75 Fellows, 15 Teams, 3 Cohorts
- 50% professionals, 50% lay leaders
- 80% house of worship, 20% community center
- 88% have not come across similar professional development experience

IMPACT: SPARK

Prior to Spark, Fellows entered the program feeling that they lacked the tools and strategic alignment with their organizations needed to advance their new vision for impact forward.

What Barriers have made this challenging?



3% of participants had been taught how to build and assess a prototype as a faith professional, and 85% had no prior experience.

3% had been made aware of the growing Jewish innovation community as a resource to leverage.

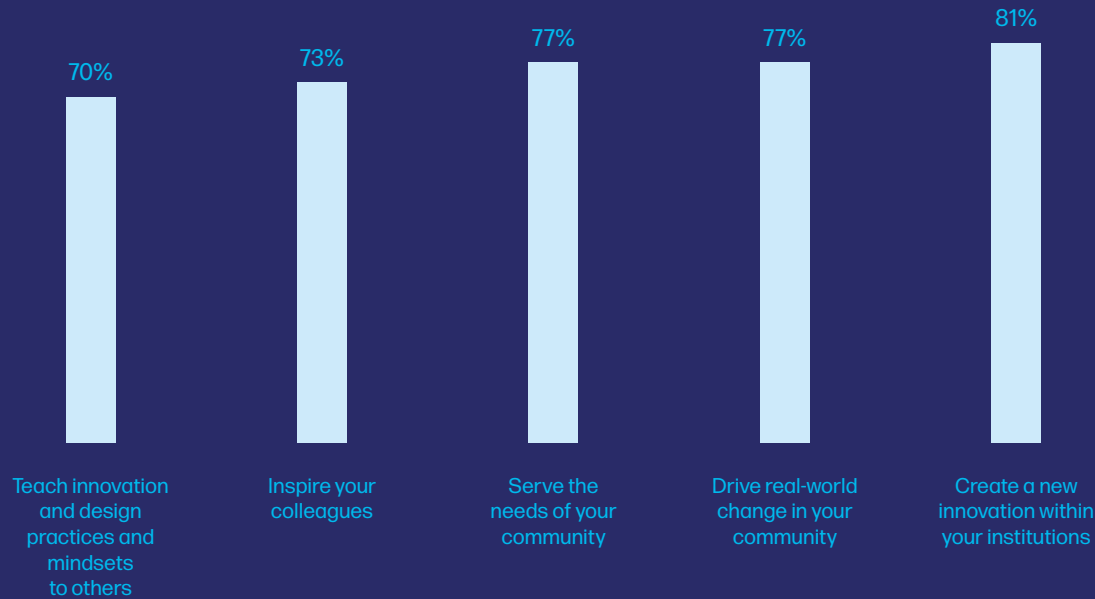
11% had been given guidance from their Jewish institutions about how to spark and sustain an institutional culture of innovation and experimentation.

19% had been exposed by faith institutions to design-thinking as a process to identify and creatively serve constituent needs.

“I have a different idea of what would make for a 'successful' congregation – I would allocate budget differently.”

Spark Participant, Cohort 1

Spark has demonstrated the capacity to inspire participant teams and equip them with the tools and mindsets to transform their institutions...



... but in order to maximize our impact, we need further investment to build out a coaching platform to offer on-going guidance, support, and training to ensure that efforts to transform institutions are sustained moving forward.

“Recently a number of engaged and involved Hebrew School families reached out to me with concerns. I have been meeting with them and interviewing them to identify their needs. I feel like Spark has taught me to listen, respect their concern for our synagogue community and their families, and identify this as an opportunity for us to learn and come up with new solutions.”

Spark Participant, Cohort 2

“I now urge board trustees and program managers to hold one-on-one conversations with constituents while gathering ideas and requirements in order to connect individual needs with the goals of a new or existing program.”

Spark Participant, Cohort 1

- Mindset transformation at the individual/professional and community/congregational levels takes a tremendous amount of intentional time.
- It also requires a shifting of capacity and resource-allocation, which ultimately means the discontinuation of legacy programs.
- Finally, participants reflected with great consistency that the organizational change they want to see will require active participation from executive leadership and some form of continued support for staff.



STORIES: SPARK

When you reinvigorate congregants, you reinvigorate synagogues.

(Not the other way around.)



Risa Tanania

Board of Directors
Congregation Beit
Simchat Torah

“Finding spiritual fulfillment in a community experience, we found, is much more likely to happen when a person feels not only a sense of belonging, but acceptance. And this starts with intentional relationship-building over a period of time, not programming.”

Did you learn something unexpected during your customer discovery interviews?

We were surprised to find that the most common theme across our notes was the challenge of being a new member. People are joining, but then they feel overwhelmed. **We realized that we had to get back to basics if we wanted members to feel the connection to others and acceptance of self that CBST was known to cultivate.**

What prototype did your team test to address this concern of new member experience?

We wanted each member to feel seen and heard by us as a community, but also by each other as a cohort for their first few years. We implemented two annual events attended by our Senior Rabbi. These are special opportunities as our community is big and it's not everyday that you get to engage with her in a small group over a sit-down dinner. **We created an institution that is now a part of CBST, and that exists to give every new member the personal attention they need to establish connection and belonging.**

“When you engage leaders, especially those of faith, in a process of personal transformation, it is those around them, in formal or informal community, that benefit most. Personal transformation is in and of itself a deepening of faith.”

Vipin Thekk, Ashoka // Glean Program Partner

When you respect and celebrate members for the entire beings that they are, you create greater opportunity for meaning-making through faith.

(It may seem counter-intuitive, but it works.)



Orit Lender
Deputy Executive Director
JCC of Staten Island

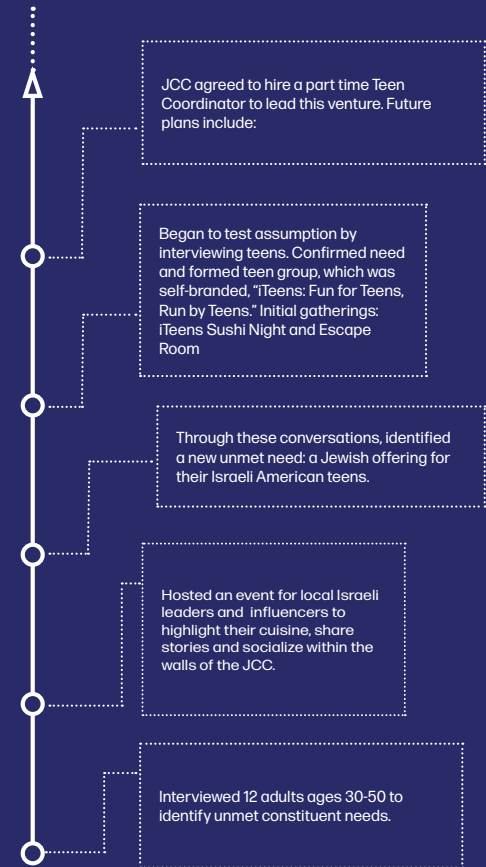
“Spark gave me permission to slow down, listen, and ask questions that leaders in other sectors are probably much more comfortable asking themselves on a regular basis, like, ‘Why are we still offering this service if no one seems to want it anymore?’”

What role should faith institutions play in today’s world?

Our history and traditions may be special, but our needs – and wants and hopes as individuals and as a community – are largely the same as our neighbors. By accepting this reality, that we [Jews] are as much different as we are the same, our JCC has actually been more successful in bringing value and meaning to our Jewish community... and also everyone else that we serve.

As a result of Spark, are you more or less inspired by your work?

I am without a doubt more inspired, and more committed. But it is not because I think that the needs of the Jewish community have become more dire. Rather, it is because I am approaching my work as a community leader, and as a Jewish community leader, in a new way – from a place of opportunity and confidence. This mindset is in part what makes my work spiritual – and what I hope also brings meaning to my staff, and our members.



“There is a growing gap between religious institutions and the people they try to serve. Our identities are not singular, nor are they unchanging, so why do legacy organizations think that they can bring meaning to masses of people, over the course of their lives, by programming to just one single identity that may no longer even exist?”

Casper ter Kuile, How We Gather // Glean Advisor

When you enable shared spiritual experience for lay and professional leaders, you increase the odds of members deriving value from your institution, and from each other.

(Yes, the behavior that leaders model actually matters.)



Rabbi Lester Bronstein
Bet Am Shalom
Synagogue



77% of graduates feel more confident in their ability to serve the needs of their community.

What brought you to Spark?

We jumped on this opportunity to participate in Spark because of our desire to support a new team of leaders within our synagogue that was comprised of members and professionals. As a result, our team had what is really a unique chance, in our field at least, to train and learn together, and to develop a new language and approach to meaning-making through Judaism.

Have you witnessed a shift in the expectations of your leadership as a result of this experience?

Absolutely. I think that the very process of learning how to better understand the needs of our congregants created meaning, and reaffirmed for many of them why they give their time to building and sustaining Jewish community. **I am confident that our staff and board now know how to ask the questions that will lead to the data that should be at the core of our efforts to create a new vision for our synagogue that will ensure its future.**

“Spark helps Jewish professionals and lay leaders break down the anxiety they are all feeling about member engagement in a systematic way so they gain the clarity and insights needed to approach institutional leadership in a new way. **I think that this is critical because while the future of our sector rests partially upon the work of entrepreneurs, it also rests upon the capabilities of leaders who want to drive incremental change and transformation from within.**”

Cyd Weissman, Reconstructing Judaism // Glean Advisor

When you integrate design-thinking efforts with strategic planning or governance processes, you enable a culture of innovation essential to transformation.



Beth Am Shalom Synagogue
White Plains, NY

“Through Spark, we learned how to listen empathetically to our congregants, and also to people outside our community, and learn more about what they are seeking. This is how we will change and grow as a community, while still retaining at a fundamental level who we are as Beth Am Shalom, and as Jews.”

Barbara Aloni, Executive VP, Board Committee

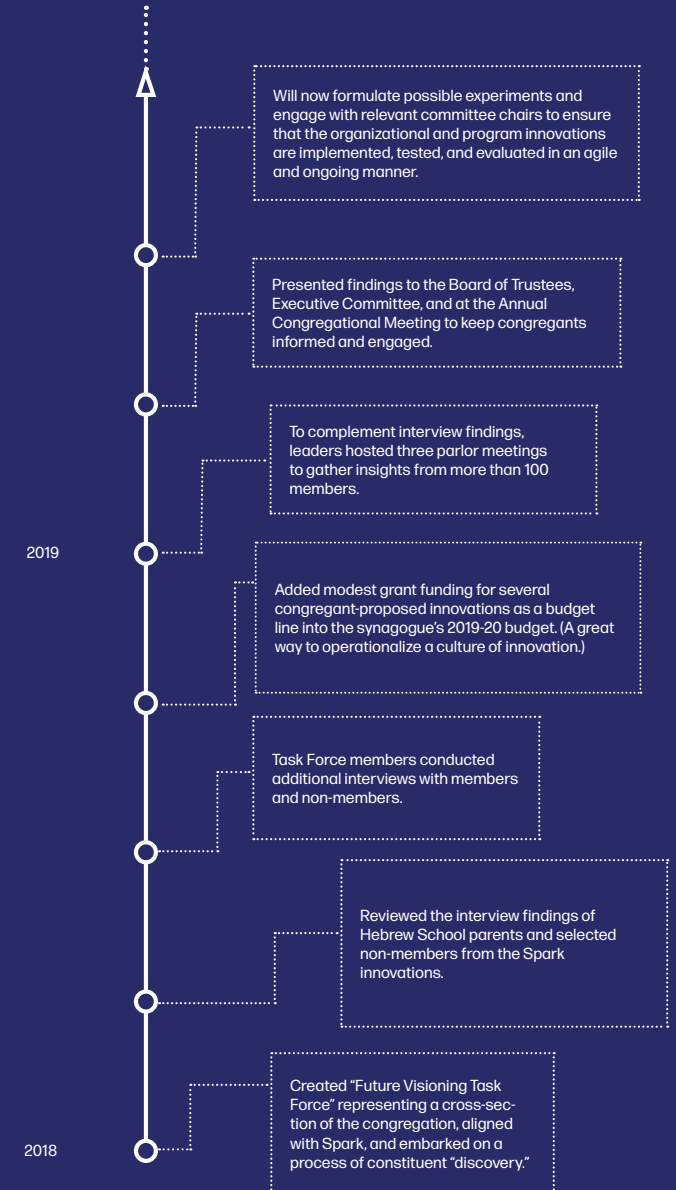
“I am so appreciative of Spark and the opportunity to learn the design-thinking methodology. We’ve opened ourselves to a new way of approaching change within our congregation. This has enriched our efforts both to envision the future and test innovations for that future.”

Ann Schaffer, Co-Chair of the Future Visioning Task Force

In 2018, the leadership of Beth Am Shalom Synagogue, White Plains, NY, decided to launch a visioning process to help the community prepare for the rapidly changing future of progressive Judaism – and so was born the Future Vision Task Force.

Instead of engaging in a more routine process of evaluation and goal-setting – one that is often insular and top-down, Ilene Semiatin, President of Beth Am Shalom, sought a more expansive and creative approach to imagining the future. Enter: SPARK.

The Fellowship experience enabled the nurturing of a new kind of mindset among not only Task Force members, but also constituents. And though still close to the beginning of the transformation process, synagogue members are embracing SPARK and its design thinking methodologies as a platform for helping the community learn to approach change and innovation in a systematic, authentic, open and positive way.



When you start small, you go big. Rather than tackling a big project, or challenge, identify more creative, intimate ways to better engage specific segments of your constituency.



Manetto Hill Jewish Center
Plainview, NY

“It takes real awareness as a leader to spot a 10 minute opportunity to delight constituents, to serve them, to meet their needs in a new way. An organization doesn’t have to overhaul its Shabbat service to reach a new audience.”

Rabbi Elan Babchuck,
Founding Director,
Spark Fellowship + Glean Network

“Spark changed the way I think about leadership and why our synagogue exists. The experience gave me a whole new mindset. Now, when I think about leading our congregation, instead of 're-branding' the old, I identify and meet the real, new needs of our members.”

Rabbi Neil Schuman, Spiritual
Leader, Manetto Hill Jewish Center



Through an intensive period of customer discovery interviewing and observing the social patterns of dozens of members, leaders of Manetto Hill Jewish Center identified two distinct populations that they believe could be better served by the organization. They also learned that their constituents value quality of experience over quantity, leading staff to pay closer attention to detail when designing new opportunities to ensure a strong “wow factor” from beginning to end.

The Center first sought to engage parents of Hebrew school students who do pick and drop off after realizing that it was a missed opportunity to provide a curated and welcoming space for parents with young children to build relationships with each other while waiting for school to let out. Some parents would chit-chat but many would mill around, likely feeling uncomfortable sparking up conversation with a new face. To better facilitate new community amongst this population, MHJC

opened, “The Time For You Café,” a thoughtful space open for 30-minutes before pick-up offering fresh espresso, good snacks, and polished silverware! Feedback is very positive and there is confirmed budget to continue to program into 2020.

Spark Fellows also learned that they could be providing more value to their “empty-nesters” – adults who may have recently retired, or whose children are all grown up with families of their own. To pilot several different engagement formats, the team hosted three events called, “The Cultivated Life at MHJC.” The events consisted of a 50’s themed drive-in movie night, a cooking class and lunch with a local chef, and a weekend BBQ featuring high-end smoked meats and a conversation about kashrut and the modern-day era. The experiences were very well-attended with guests commenting on the quality and thought that went into each, and Fellows also walked away with additional insight about customer segmentation that they will use to iterate in the near future.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Organizations that embrace a culture of continuous learning and improvement are much more likely to have impact, long-term.

This is why we took the time to look back at our work through the eyes of our participants, partners and advisors.

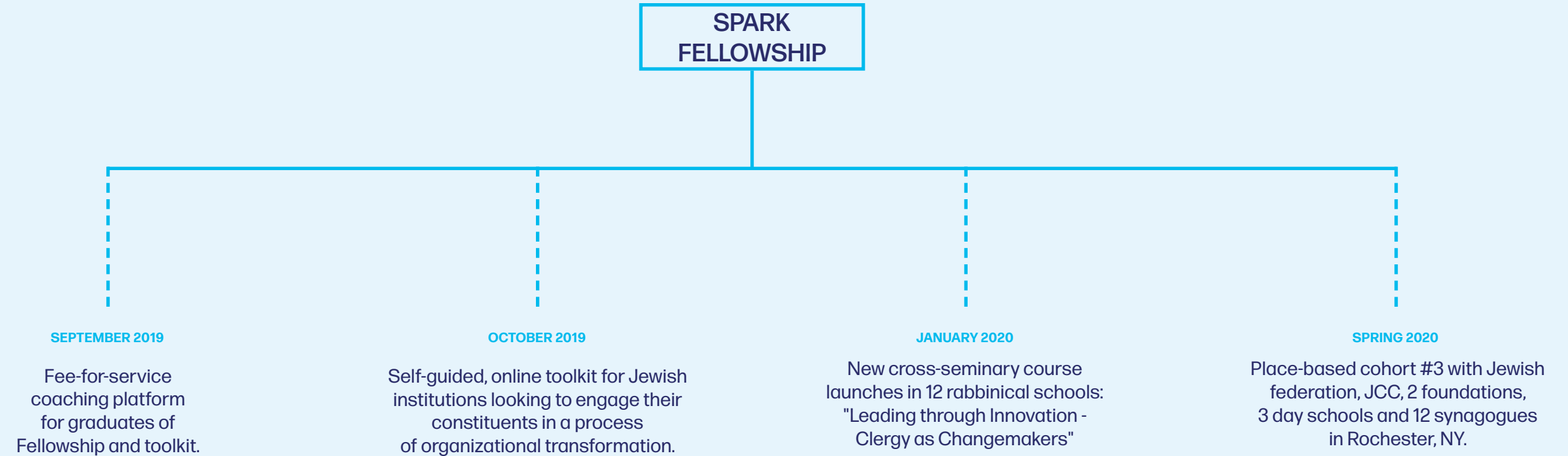
We affirmed that our work is in demand, and identified the ways in which our programs are enabling faith leaders to better serve the spiritual needs of American Jews today.

But perhaps most importantly, we gathered insights into the growth opportunities of our programs, and harnessed ideas that can help us scale our efforts.



Moving forward, Spark will not only support its graduates, but also test new ways to inspire and empower more communities to join in.

Spark's Next Iterations



Thank you to our partners and supporters.



UJA-Federation of New York cares for Jews everywhere and New Yorkers of all backgrounds, responds to crises close to home and far away, and shapes our Jewish future.

“The partnership between UJA Federation of New York and Clal marries our philanthropic abiding commitment to helping our Jewish community thrive by adapting to the rapidly changing landscape and Clal’s deep expertise in bringing entrepreneurial skills to legacy institutions.”

Adina Frydman, Executive Director, Community Resources, UJA-Federation of New York



JOIN US.

We invite all Jewish federations, foundations, synagogues, community centers, seminaries and conveners to participate in the work ahead.

Play a role in the transformation of our tradition's institutions and their leaders by supporting the growth and development of the following user-generated and in-demand resources:

- **Spark Fund** to provide micro-grants to launch and scale innovation projects at participating and graduate Fellowship teams. *\$50,000 needed for 2020-2021.*
- **Scholarship Fund** to enable diverse and inclusive representation across institutional type and professional level. *\$35,000 needed for 2020-2021.*
- **Coaching platform** to provide on-going change management support and innovation guidance for graduates. *\$25,000 needed for 2020-2021.*
- **Storytelling platform** to amplify the success of our graduates and inspire our network with stories of personal, institutional, and communal transformation. *\$20,000 needed for 2020-2021.*

Clal 

