

# SHINUI: THE NETWORK FOR INNOVATION IN PART-TIME JEWISH EDUCATION

Shinui brings together community agencies to support each other in sparking, nurturing, and spreading innovation. In order for the collaboration to be successful it requires that all the partnering agencies ascribe to the vision and the goals and that we each agree to a shared set of obligations and responsibilities.

## VISION AND GOALS

We are a network of community agencies committed to bringing innovative Jewish education to families in our local communities. Recognizing that we are stronger and more effective together, we will work to learn from one another so that all of our communities benefit from the work of the others.

*OUR 2014-15 WILDLY IMPORTANT GOAL:* By July 2015, Shinui will have sparked, nurtured, and/or spread innovative and effective Jewish educational models among 80 educational institutions within our five cities.

## COMMITTED RESOURCES

Each partnering agency agrees to commit the following resources to the Shinui network:

*EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR* (or other executive staff member) – joins the Executive Team, which works to assure the fulfillment of the vision and mission and to support the execution of the Shinui work plans. The Executive Team meets monthly via conference call.

*MANHE/MANHA* (Hebrew: coach)– the staff person at the agency who works most closely with congregational educators – to create and execute an agency work plan to “expose” organizations to examples of innovation and support organizations in deep “exploration” of innovation. *Manchim* meet together monthly in conference calls and have monthly half-hour check-in calls with the Project Director. In addition, *manchim* meet with their colleagues as learning opportunities arise and collaborate to develop shared resources (see “Organizational Learning”).

*MATERIALS* – Shinui agencies are committed to learning from one another for the shared purpose of sparking, nurturing, and spreading innovation. Therefore, each Shinui agency is also committed to freely sharing their materials, programs, and learnings with their colleagues.

## VALUE ADDED

Shinui agencies are engaged in an experiment; we are learning how community agencies can learn from one another and create greater value by working together. To date, we have seen much value added from this collective approach. We believe the value each agency experiences will change and increase as we become more intentional and effective at sharing with one another.

*EXPOSURE TO INNOVATION:* Based on the individual work plans provided by each agency, Shinui creates opportunities for educators to learn about innovations around the country and engage more deeply with their colleagues in thinking through how to implement such innovations. In 2015, Shinui will present a four-part webinar series on the *Dynamics of Educational Change*, each webinar featuring two innovators from different Shinui communities who will share their process for making change and the innovation that resulted. *Manchim* are also currently exploring how to connect educators across communities around particular topics (e.g., multi-generational education models) to wrestle with the issues together and provide support for each other.

*ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING:* Each Shinui agency is engaging in its own organic learning process through its participation in the project. For example, each of the *manchim* reviewed materials produced by one agency about extant innovative models. Most of the *manchim* chose to review these materials with their coworkers to learn about different kinds of innovations and discuss what applies to in their communities, what might be introduced, and what further learning is needed. The *manchim* in turn provided feedback on the usefulness of these materials, providing a further learning opportunity to the authoring agency to learn about its own resources. This is one example of many of shared learning opportunities that have taken place so far.

*A NEW NARRATIVE:* The national narrative around congregational education has long been a negative one, from parents who remembered “I suffered through Hebrew school” to national studies that have claimed congregational education has little impact on Jewish identity. Shinui is engaged with a public relations consultant to change the narrative of congregational education. We are following a plan to share stories in local media (Jewish and secular) about the good news in each community – profiles of congregations and other organizations that have changed their educational approaches and can see impact in their families. We are also working to tell a new story in the national narrative, one that describes the powerful potential of part-time Jewish education, especially those engaging in innovative models and approaches.

*EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS:* Although still in its early stages, the work of Shinui is intended to help each agency more efficiently and effectively meet its own goals around innovation in congregational education. By working with and learning from colleagues in other community agencies, the *manchim* should be able to better inspire more educators to learn about innovation, to take first steps toward innovation, and to work in partnership with their agencies to implement innovative educational approaches.