Innovations Guide
User Protocol

Goals

- Become familiar with the BMR’s online B'nai Mitzvah Innovations Guide
- Become familiar with the six Purposes that usually drive b'nai mitzvah innovation
- Determine a Purpose(s) for b'nai mitzvah innovation based on learnings about your congregation’s b'nai mitzvah process and program
- Identify a b'nai mitzvah related experiment that your team is considering:
  - an innovation that your team would like to adapt, or
  - an issue you would like to consider when planning for experimentation

What

Two meetings with a team of b'nai mitzvah stakeholders, with assignments for team members prior to and between the meetings.

1. Meeting #1: B'nai Mitzvah Innovations Guide 1.5 hours
   - Welcome - 5 minutes
   - Review - 10 minutes
   - Identify your possible Purposes - 60 minutes
   - Assignment Distribution - 10 minutes
   - Wrap Up - 5 minutes

2. Homework Assignment Between Meetings
   Online Innovations Guide Exploration (Up to one hour individually or with a partner)

3. Meeting #2: Identifying your Main Purpose - 1.5 hours
   - Welcome - 5 minutes
   - Share Learnings from Innovations Guide - 30 minutes
   - Identify innovations or issues that resonate - 15 minutes
   - Determine Your Purpose - 15 minutes
   - Preparing for Next Steps - 25 minutes
   - Wrap up - 5 minutes

This protocol includes directions for facilitating two meetings with a team of b'nai mitzvah stakeholders. Instructions for those meetings are described in greater detail below. Before holding those meetings, there is planning work that you will need to do that will enhance the efficacy of the work. Please read through the full protocol, including the details for each meeting in order to orient yourself to the types of conversations you will be having and the work you will need to do to prepare.
Getting Ready for Experimentation

- **Gather a team**
  Sustainable change requires a team (professional and lay) working together. Convene a team of thoughtful b'nai mitzvah stakeholders in your community.

  Inform those team members of the scope of the work you are asking them to do, the time commitment expected, and the dates of the two meetings.

- **Articulate a vision**
  Visioning and planning are critical components of any change process. If you already have articulated a vision for b'nai mitzvah in your congregation, you are ready to delve into experimentation. You will have an opportunity to look at the Innovation Guide through the lens of your vision and goals.

  It is likely that your congregation does not yet have a vision for b'nai mitzvah. This does not in any way prevent you from generating ideas and developing a possible experiment to test. Yet, although tempting, it would be a mistake to simply find an innovation your planning team likes and try to replicate it as the new program may not align with goals and culture of your unique community. This exploration of the Innovations Guide could serve as a first step in your congregation’s journey toward creating a vision for b'nai mitzvah.

  If you choose to engage in some visioning work prior to delving into the Innovations Guide and developing an experiment, consider these resources which may help you:
  - Read the BMR’s [Theory of Change](#) to learn more about visioning and planning
  - Bring [these exercises](#) to your team to aid in creating a vision for b'nai mitzvah

  Each program profiled in the Innovations Guide was created after considerable planning and in keeping with that institution’s vision and culture. If one or more of these innovations appeals to you, begin by considering its rationale and purpose. Are these in keeping with the vision you have been articulating? If not, this might suggest that either:
    a) this might not be the best innovation to consider; or
    b) your vision needs to be broadened or altered in some way.
MEETING #1 - B'nai Mitzvah Innovations Guide

Materials Needed:
- Copies of B'nai Mitzvah Innovation Purposes (Handout 1)
- Copies of prepared Getting to Know our B'nai Mitzvah Process Chart (Handout 2) that lists the components of your congregation’s b'nai mitzvah process and identifies which purposes each components serve.
- Copies of Homework (Handout 3)
- Digital devices (laptops, tablets, or LCD projector) with internet access to the B'nai Mitzvah Revolution Innovations Guide

Meeting Preparation:
1. Encourage all team members to spend time with the Innovations Guide. Invite them to just click around to get an overview of the tool.
2. Customize and complete the Getting to Know our B'nai Mitzvah Process chart (Handout 2) on page 10. Add and/or delete components in the left-hand column to reflect your congregation’s b'nai mitzvah process. For each component, put a mark in the appropriate Purpose column(s). Bring this chart to your team meeting for discussion.

Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B'nai Mitzvah Component</th>
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3. Assign homework of guided inquiry of 2-3 innovations within each selected Purpose. These assignments will be given to the team members during the meeting.

Meeting Timeline: 1.5 hours
- Welcome - 5 minutes
- Review - 10 minutes
- Identify your possible Purposes - 60 minutes
- Homework Assignment Distribution - 10 minutes
- Wrap Up - 5 minutes
Meeting Activities:

Welcome: (5 minutes)

- Welcome and thank everyone for participating.
- Give an overview of this project, sharing why it is important and what you hope will come out of it.

Review: (10 minutes)

Invite individuals to share reactions to the online Innovations Guide. Possible questions you might ask to generate conversation:

- What stood out for you about this tool?
- What do you think is important for your group to keep in mind as you do this work?
- Are there experiments, ideas, or strategies here that your team might be able to learn from?

Identify Your Possible Purposes (60 minutes)

Distribute the B’nai Mitzvah Innovation Purposes (Handout 1).

Review the six main Purposes that typically drive b’nai mitzvah Innovation:

- **Repairing the World**: Innovations that inspire practice of mitzvot typically relating to G’milut Hasadim (loving acts of kindness), Tikkun Olam (social justice).
- **Innovative Rituals**: Innovations that add new rituals into the b’nai mitzvah process or inspire practice of mitzvot typically relating to Torah (learning) and Avodah (prayer or ritual).
- **Mentoring**: Innovations that connect b’nai mitzvah students and/or families with others in the community who will nurture, teach and guide them.
- **Becoming an Adolescent**: Innovations that support children and their families by focusing on social, emotional, cognitive, spiritual and other changes and milestones that happen before, during and after adolescence.
- **Participating in Community**: Innovations that infuse the bar/bat mitzvah preparation with personal meaning, while maintaining the communal nature of the congregation and the service.
- **Family Engagement**: Innovations that work to engage whole families in Jewish learning and practice.

Discuss each of the Purposes:

1. Which of the Purposes make the most sense to you in connection with your vision for b’nai mitzvah? (See above, pg. 2)
2. Share the prepared Getting to Know our B’nai Mitzvah Process Chart (Handout 2) that lists the components of your congregation b’nai mitzvah process and the Purpose(s) that each component addresses.
3. Notice which of the Purposes your congregation focuses on. How well are these Purposes being met? What’s working and what’s not working toward meeting each Purpose?
4. Which of the Purposes are not a focus in your current b’nai mitzvah process? Does this
seem like a gap you want to address? Why or why not?

5. Which of the following do you want to explore?
   a. Enhancing what you are already doing towards furthering one of the Purposes
   b. Focusing on something that is not currently being addressed

6. Determine the 1-2 Purpose(s) you want to explore and discuss how they align with your vision.

   *Remember that these projects take the form of experiments. You are not expected to fix everything at once. Therefore, we suggest that you limit yourselves to one or two Purposes to investigate further.*

**Homework Assignment Distribution - 10 minutes**

Turn to the online Innovations Guide to see the list of innovations that seek to meet the Purpose(s) you have identified.

Distribute the Homework (Handout 3).

Assign each team member, or pair of team members, 2-3 innovations to explore that meet this (or these) Purpose(s). Review the assignment and the questions listed on the Homework handout. Decide together what and how you would like the material to be shared at the next meeting. Also decide how/who will remind everyone about their assignment.

Confirm together the date and time of the next team meeting.

**Wrap Up - 5 minutes**

Invite everyone to reflect on the meeting by sharing how a Purpose you have identified resonates with them. You may do it in a sentence whip, such as “I think (insert Purpose) is important for our congregation because ________________.”
MEETING #2: Identifying Your Main Purpose

Materials Needed
- Paper and pens for team members
- Digital devices (laptops, tablets, or LCD projector) with internet access to the B'nai Mitzvah Revolution Innovations Guide

Meeting Timeline: 1.5 hours
- Welcome - 5 minutes
- Share Learnings from Innovations Guide - 30 minutes
- Identify innovations or issues that resonate - 15 minutes
- Determine Your Purpose - 15 minutes
- Preparing for Next Steps - 25 minutes
- Wrap up - 5 minutes

Meeting Activities:
Welcome - 5 minutes
- Welcome and thank everyone for participating
- Give an overview of the meeting
- Pull up the Innovations Guide so that team members can reference it when needed

Share Learnings from Innovations Guide - 30 minutes
Everyone reports back on the 1-2 innovations they were most enthusiastic about, briefly describing the innovation and answer questions 1-3:
1. What do you think led this institution to introduce this particular innovation? What issues might they have been concerned with?
2. As best you can tell, what vision / values / goals underlie this innovation? List these values as you identify them.
3. What is appealing to you about this innovation? What concerns do you have about it?
Address questions from the group.

Identify innovations or issues that resonate - 15 minutes
Individual Free Write: Each participant spends five minutes collecting his/her thoughts, in writing, about the innovations introduced. Ideas will be shared with the group, not the writing.
Possible prompts for the writing:
- What is it about any of the innovations that resonates with you and why?
- What concerns do you have about any of the innovations and why?
- Describe a tentative innovation idea that you are imagining. Which Purpose(s) would it address? What excites you about this idea? What concerns does it present?

Discuss what people are excited about, what concerns they are holding and any thoughts they have about experimentation ideas for your congregation.
Determine Your Purpose - 15 minutes

Decide which of the six Purposes driving b'nai mitzvah innovation is most compelling to your team.

If there is already a clearly shared Purpose, name it for the team and move on to the next activity.

If there are a few possibilities, poll the group to see which Purposes resonate most, then engage in a group discussion that will bring you to agreement on where to focus the next phase of your work. Some possible ways to structure the conversation include:

- Invite everyone to share their perspective on why a particular Purpose is most important.
- Ask the group how they would like to come to an agreement.
- If the group is struggling to come to consensus, you can “take the temperature” of those in the meeting using the following scale:
  1. I can say “YES” to the decision. I am satisfied that the decision is an expression of the wisdom of the group.
  2. I can live with the decision; I’m not especially enthusiastic about it.
  3. I do not agree with the decision and feel the need to stand in the way of this decision.
  4. I feel that we have no clear sense of unity in the group. We need to do more work before consensus is reached.

Preparing for Next Steps - 25 minutes

- Briefly describe a tentative b'nai mitzvah related innovation idea that your team is considering. Which Purpose(s) are you hoping it will address? What excites you most about this idea? What concerns do you have with it?
- What would you need to consider and what would need to happen in order to continue this work?

Wrap-up (5 minutes)

Invite everyone to reflect on the meeting by sharing either:

- something they learned during these sessions
- something they are looking forward to in the next phase of this work

Make plans to continue the work.
Taking the Next Step

Congratulations on making it to this point! You hopefully have an idea for an experiment that you would like develop further, or an agenda of items for further conversation with your team.

In order to get the most out of this process, and to keep moving forward with your work, here are some suggestions for continuing your work:

- Use the resources on the b'nai mitzvah Revolution web site:
  - BMR Theory of Change and Visioning exercises: Articulate, or re-visit, your vision
  - Continue to learn what you can from the online Innovations Guide about innovations related to your Purpose(s).
  - Utilize the Learning Units for Congregational Teams

- Join the conversation!
  - Participate in the conversation on the BMR Facebook Page.
  - URJ congregations can join conversations in the URJ Tent.

- Please be in touch with us at bnaimitzvah@urj.org to let us know what you’re experimenting with and how it’s going.
Handout 1

B’nai Mitzvah Innovation Purposes

These are the six main Purposes that typically drive b’nai mitzvah innovation:

- **Repairing the World**: Innovations that inspire practice of mitzvot typically relating to G’milut Hasadim (loving acts of kindness) and Tikkun Olam (social justice).
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- **Family Engagement**: Innovations that work to engage whole families in Jewish learning and practice.
Handout 2

Getting To Know our B’nai Mitzvah Process

Directions: Look at the chart below. Customize the components in the left hand column to reflect the elements of your congregation’s b’nai mitzvah process. For each component, put a mark in the appropriate Purpose column(s) according to the definitions provided on Handout 1.

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Handout 3:

Homework

Spend about 1 hour learning about your assigned innovation(s), on your own or with a partner. Feel free to follow the links to the institution’s website to learn more about the institution and innovation.

Use the following questions to guide your inquiry:

1. What do you think led this institution to introduce this particular innovation? What issues might they have been concerned with?
2. As best you can tell, what vision / values / goals underlie this innovation?
3. What is appealing to you about this innovation? What concerns do you have about it?
4. What might you like to adapt for your congregation? In what way(s) might you adapt it?
5. If you did not find any ideas you want to adapt, did you generate ideas about issues you would like to consider when planning for an experiment at your congregation?

Gather information to share with the team at meeting #2 to describe the innovation and share answers to questions 1-3 above.