

Impact Brief 2021



UPSTART

upstartlab.org

For more than two decades, UpStart has operated from a core belief: that Jewish life has thrived—and evolved dramatically—for millennia because trailblazing leaders have developed new ways for us to connect with its enduring values, traditions, and wisdom. This adaptive thinking and creative risk-taking is characteristic of what we call an “UpStarter,” the visionaries and trailblazers who are forging new paths in Jewish life for communities around the world.

Over the past year and a half, the Jewish community has faced more challenges than anyone could have predicted. But the ventures and individuals in UpStart's network have worked tirelessly to adapt and evolve their offerings to meet our community's emerging needs—and we've been with them every step of the way.

UpStart invests in ventures and leaders with targeted support to take their bold Jewish ideas to implementation and beyond. At the same time, we actively engage the Jewish social entrepreneurship ecosystem—including philanthropic partners and institutions—to build enabling environments for Jewish innovation to thrive at a local and national scale.

This impact brief is an illustration of the changes we've affected over the past year – a year unlike any other. Despite the challenges of the last year, UpStart's north star has remained: a thriving system of leaders, ventures, organizations, and philanthropists who are continually creating and renewing Jewish experiences that expand access to Jewish life. These experiences, in turn, enrich individuals, communities, and the world, helping us thrive everyday, and in the face of turbulent times.

Over the past year, we've been measuring our progress toward our outcomes, and we're proud of what we see. In this report, we'll share the top three areas in which we made meaningful progress, including how we quickly pivoted our services to address the shifting needs of our ventures. The robust data we've gathered shows UpStart's impact, learnings, and insights on how we've supported the community and wider Jewish communal field. As we enter this next chapter, we—and the entire UpStart network—will continue to rise to the occasion, dreaming and acting boldly in the pursuit of change.

We could not do this work without our philanthropic partners. We're grateful for their continued support for the ventures, leaders, and our entire network, as they seed the ideas that will help Jewish life thrive for generations to come.

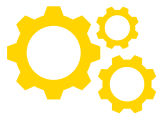


Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Aaron Katler".

Aaron Katler
CEO

UpStart fuels a growing network of bold leaders that is changing the status quo in Jewish life. Every day, we partner with these leaders to expand the picture of how Jews find meaning and how we come together. Our programs accelerate the success of bold leaders and organizations through:



Trainings



Connections



Strategic Investments



Venture Accelerator & Entrepreneurship Programs

We identify and support the best and brightest ventures in the Jewish community. We measure their progress and success, and scale the highest-impact ideas to change the Jewish future.



Change Accelerator & Institutional Change Programs

We empower creative leaders at long-standing institutions to identify opportunities for change, supporting their ability to launch relevant, bold initiatives that better serve their constituents' needs.



Network Offerings & Convenings

We bring together a growing network to ignite new thinking and seed game-changing collaborations that move the needle on our community's biggest challenges.

Who we are, what we value, and how we approach our work is best described by the UpStart Team Philosophy:

To dream with purpose, build the 'what might be', and grow the good.

Dream with Purpose: Leadership Development

In FY 21, UpStart provided increased leadership support for bold leaders:

285

social entrepreneurs served
*35% increase from the previous year**

240

hours of coaching, advising, and mentorship to program participants
*26% increase**

Build the "What Might Be": Financial Investment

In FY21, UpStart increased financial support for game-changing ideas:

\$250K

invested in the UpStart
Venture Alumni Network
*5x increase**

\$1M

in strategic investments to early
and growth stage ventures
*5% increase**

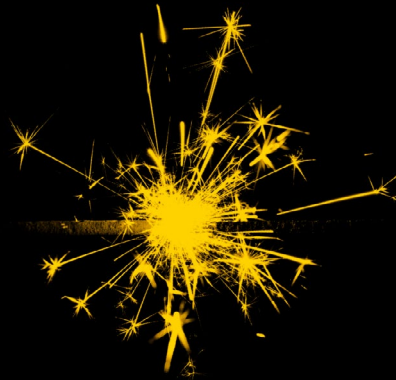
Grow the Good: Community Support

2x

the number of geographic communities
served in North America**

*Compared to previous fiscal year

**Communities served defined as serving at least 10 direct program participants in that geographic community



While maintaining our flagship offerings, the UpStart team launched new opportunities for training, connections, and Strategic Investments to combat the unique challenges of the pandemic.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND ALLIANCES

UpStart provided curated training, specialized coaching, and financial support to ventures in our network and within the broader Jewish ecosystem to enable them to pursue strategic partnerships and alliances. These partnerships enabled organizations to increase their impact, leverage their unique talents and capacities, and utilize resources more efficiently. UpStart provided the following resources to support exploration of partnerships:

20 ventures in our network received targeted coaching

\$236,450 in grants distributed to 23 ventures

Early-stage ventures received an average of \$3,200 per grant, and UpStart alumni received an average of \$12,500, with our largest grants reaching \$20,000.



UpStart's guidance and support was absolutely essential and critical throughout our merger process. We are so blessed to have an organization like UpStart at a time when the challenges we face demand that we think differently about everything we do.

JAKIR MANELA

Chief Executive Officer at Pearlstone Retreat Center & Event Campus

INNOVATOR 2.0 GRANT FUND

The pandemic provided particular challenges for ventures that rely on earned income - many with few places to turn to as their contracts, ticket sales, and tuition fees were eliminated or dramatically reduced. UpStart's financial support specifically designed for these ventures allowed many to retain staff, pilot new offerings, and provide quality youth-enrichment programs to hundreds of children across the country.

Four ventures received between \$20,000 and \$25,000 in funding, totaling a \$95,000 investment from UpStart.



With the UpStart Innovator 2.0 grant, I was able to retain all the incredible educators on my staff even during the pandemic shutdown. With that funding, we were able to send an educator to every child for a weekly outdoor visit, and we had 980 one-on-one engagements during the 20-21 school year with children and parents. Our families reflect on all the dedicated pastoral care and regular classes as the only anchor and stability their families had through the exceedingly difficult pandemic winter. Thank you for making that possible!

BEVERLY SOCHER LERNER

Founding Director, Makom Community

UpStart is no stranger to agility and iteration. In fact, it's been part of our DNA since we first started, and was successfully tested over the past year. We exist to serve the bold leaders so that they can continue to create meaningful Jewish experiences, and will continue to assess and learn from our experiences to ensure greater impact year after year.

In FY22, we are doubling down on our commitment to dream with purpose, build the “what might be,” and grow the good. To do so, we will specifically track our impact in three key areas:



Dream with Purpose: Data-Informed Design

UpStart is committed to deepening our investment in sourcing and supporting the highest impact ideas. To do so, we have created a Learning & Design division, which will enable us to more effectively leverage data and metrics to inform program pivots, designs, and experiments—and support our network in doing the same.



Build the “What Might Be”: Increase Financial Support

Over the next year, UpStart will continue to financially invest in the bold leaders in our network. By effectively partnering with funders, we will increase resources to best support those with the most potential in creating impact in our sector.



Grow the Good: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Justice (DEIJ)

UpStart has launched a number of initiatives focusing specifically on exploring new ways to build a more diverse and equitable innovation sector, leveraging our network as a force for change. In the beginning of FY22, we hired a Senior Director of DEIJ, effectively partnered with the Jews of Color Initiative to launch a program geared specifically for leaders who identify as Jews of Color, began developing a framework for advancing more equity-informed entrepreneurial leadership, and advanced this work at the Board level.

We will continue to track our progress on all three of these initiatives, learning every step of the way how to best ignite the spark that brings bold Jewish ideas to light.



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If you have questions about this Impact Brief or general questions about UpStart, please reach out to info@upstartlab.org.

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