



CENTER FOR  
SMALL TOWN  
JEWISH LIFE



Jewish  
Federations  
of North America

# The Makom Fellowship

The Makom Fellowship supports professional and lay leaders of small Jewish communities in their efforts to cultivate vibrant, inclusive Jewish life rooted in their community's sense of place (*makom*). This initiative of the Center for Small Town Jewish Life at Colby College, in partnership with the Jewish Federations of North America, advances our shared vision of a diverse Jewish landscape that affirms the value of every individual and the power of mutually beneficial collaboration.

The Makom Fellowship trains leaders of small Jewish communities to:

1. Create engaging, financially sustainable Jewish communal activities and learn from their experiences to improve the quality and impact of subsequent activities.
2. Foster inclusiveness by providing dignified access to Jewish communal activities regardless of socioeconomic status, racial identity, family composition, or other factors.
3. Cultivate meaningful relationships with and among community members through communal activities and one-on-one engagement.
4. Empower community members to deepen and express their Jewishness by rooting it in their strong sense of place.

## Mission and Impact

By providing outstanding training, mentorship, and peer support to professionals who serve communities outside of major Jewish population centers, we empower talented leaders to cultivate vibrant, inclusive Jewish life rooted in their community's sense of place.

Through their participation in the Makom Fellowship, these Fellows gain confidence in program design as well as fundraising and fiscal management, empathy for marginalized members of the Jewish community, appreciation for the value of relationship-based engagement, and passion for place-based expressions of Jewishness. They feel proud of their work cultivating Jewish life in small communities and supported by others who do the same. The organizations they serve experience deeper engagement in Jewish life from a greater number of people as these community members develop stronger relationships with their organizations, with one another, and with their own sense of Jewishness.

## About the Program

The Makom Fellowship Professional Cohort meets every other week over the course of three years, excluding vacation and holiday periods. The first year of the Fellowship focuses on a relational approach to leadership and on rooting a community's approach to Jewishness in its unique sense of place. Fellows develop skills in community organizing, organizational management, and lay leader development, along with other specific skills needed by professional leaders of small communities outside of major Jewish population centers. The second year of the fellowship focuses on adaptive leadership and change management. Fellows explore their own leadership style, strengths, and areas of growth as they delve into dynamics of diversity, equity, and inclusion that impact small Jewish communities. During the third year of the Fellowship, Fellows deepen their understanding of issues particularly relevant to cohort members as they continue to learn from experts in the field. Third-year Fellows also learn to apply a design-thinking approach to implement a new or strengthened entrepreneurial initiative in their own community, rooted in values of partnership, collaboration, and mutual benefit.

In addition to cohort-based learning, each Makom Fellow meets on a regular basis over the three-year Fellowship period with an experienced mentor, whose role is to help the Fellow grow personally and professionally.

Each June, Fellows attend the Maine Conference for Jewish Life in Waterville, Maine. There, they participate in Makom-specific sessions, meet other leaders serving small Jewish communities, and celebrate Shabbat in a pluralistic setting with hundreds of small-town Jews. Fellows also attend a mid-week retreat each winter in a rotating host community, designed to provide an opportunity for learning and relationship-building across Fellowship cohorts.

During the second year of Fellowship, Fellows have the opportunity to invite two lay leaders from their community to participate in a year-long cohort-based lay leadership development program focused on community visioning, leading through relationship, building strong partnerships between lay and professional leaders, and cultivating Jewishishness that is deeply rooted in a sense of place. These lay leaders attend the Maine Conference for Jewish Life at the beginning and end of their cohort period.

We estimate the value of the services provided during the Fellowship period to be \$60,000 over three years. We expect organizations to make a contribution toward program costs in a manner consistent with the organization's resources. We understand that some organizations can only make modest financial contributions.

## We Provide Fellows

- About 60 Zoom-based workshops, 60 “drop in” meetings for peer support, 3-4 in-person Shabbatons, and 3 midweek retreats over the three-year Fellowship period.
- A mentor with deep experience serving small communities who provides approximately 24 Zoom-based mentorship sessions and visits the fellow’s community at least once during the three-year Fellowship period.
- A site visit by Center for Small Town Jewish Life staff, intended to support professional and lay leaders in strategic visioning for their community.
- Peer support from other emerging leaders of small Jewish communities.
- Access to a network of professionals who serve small Jewish communities.

All costs associated with travel for Fellowship programs, both for Fellows and for participating lay leaders, are fully subsidized by the Center for Small Town Jewish life.

## Eligibility

An ideal Makom Organization:

- Is located outside of a major Jewish population center. Makom communities often describe themselves as rural, remote, or small-town.
- Has the potential for long-term vibrancy.
- Seeks to hire a rabbi, cantor, or other Jewish communal professional for a full-time (or nearly full-time) executive leadership position to start in Summer 2023, or is currently served by such a professional who arrived within the past three years.
- Is sufficiently sound, both in terms of finances and volunteer engagement, to support their new professional. This includes paying salary and benefits for the entirety of the professional’s contract as well as providing appropriate lay leadership in partnership with that professional.
- Has lay leaders who understand their organization’s strengths and weaknesses and are eager to learn from past and present challenges.
- Has a willingness to serve all community members, not just those who pay dues.
- Has lay leaders who are committed to the Fellowship’s objectives, supportive of their new professional’s active participation, and eager to participate themselves in a more limited capacity.

An ideal Makom Fellow:

- Serves, or is about to begin serving, an organization that meets the description above.
- Has completed graduate-level education suitable for their role in the organization.
- Is eager to benefit from and contribute to a cohort-based learning experience designed for small Jewish communities.
- Is committed to cultivating vibrant, inclusive Jewish life rooted in their community's sense of place and is interested in developing their leadership skills.

If you are not sure if you or your community meet these qualifications, please reach out to [makom@colby.edu](mailto:makom@colby.edu), and we would be happy to have a conversation.

## How to Apply

Please visit <https://jewishlife.colby.edu/makom/> to complete a brief online application. The application for lay leaders requires the participation of 2-3 individuals, including at least one current board member. Review of applications takes place on a rolling basis and typically includes an interview with the Makom Fellowship selection committee. Professionals and lay leaders submit separate applications, either concurrently or sequentially (in either order). The selection committee will grant provisional acceptance into the Makom Fellowship on the basis of a single application, with full acceptance contingent upon successful completion of both applications and upon formal approval by the fellow and the organization's board of the Fellowship's shared expectations (available at <https://jewishlife.colby.edu/makom/>).

Organizations seeking new professional leadership are encouraged to apply early in their search process, as Center for Small Town Jewish Life staff will provide search-related guidance to Makom-suitable organizations. Professionals should only apply if they currently serve a potentially suitable organization or if they have just committed to doing so.