



CENTER FOR
SMALL TOWN
JEWISH LIFE



**Jewish
Federations**
of North America

Makom

Cultivating Leadership for Vibrant Jewish Life in Small, Rural, and Remote Communities

“Mah nora ha'makom ha'zeh!” - How awesome is this place! (Genesis 28:17)

The importance of “place” is core to our work at the Center for Small Town Jewish Life. We strive to cultivate thriving, socially equitable communities outside of major metropolitan areas, communities that are rooted in their own sense of place, nourished by transformational learning, and intertwined with the broader Jewish world. We pursue this goal by nurturing relationships, setting high expectations, and putting our values into action. The Center’s success in Maine rests on the kind of leadership that we practice and the mutually beneficial ecosystem that we foster. Makom empowers leaders across the country to employ the same techniques in their own local contexts as they strengthen their Jewish organizations and communities.

What is Makom?

Makom supports professional and volunteer leaders in their efforts to cultivate vibrant, inclusive Jewish life by focusing on relational and adaptive approaches to leadership while teaching the practical skills needed to run their organizations effectively. The word *makom* (Hebrew for “place”) captures our emphasis on fostering Jewishness rooted in each community’s local culture. Makom serves organizations in small, rural, and remote communities that employ full-time (or nearly full-time) Jewish communal professionals as their executive leaders. This program, launched in 2022 in collaboration with 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.

Makom includes:

- A three-year cohort-based training program for executive professionals (“fellows”) focused on the particular needs of small, rural, and remote Jewish communities. The cohort meets approximately every other week from August through June to learn from experts and from one another’s experiences, as well as to provide mutual support. Sample [first](#) and [second](#) year curriculum outlines can be found here.
- Personal mentorship for fellows from a seasoned professional serving in a similar role.

- In-person gatherings for fellows in December/January in a rotating Makom community and in June at the Maine Conference for Jewish Life.
- Coaching for volunteer leaders, including search support during the process through which these leaders hire prospective fellows.
- A year-long training program (during the second year of their organization's participation in Makom) that empowers rising volunteer leaders to engage in values-driven and relationship-oriented leadership. Select volunteer leaders will also be invited to attend the Maine Conference for Jewish Life.
- A series of workshops for professional and volunteer leaders that provide practical training to address specific challenges that Jewish organizations in small, rural, and remote locations often confront.
- A relationship-building visit by Center for Small Town Jewish Life staff that introduces organizational leaders to the Center's approach to cultivating vibrant Jewish life in small, rural, and remote communities.
- 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 to Makom programs by professional and volunteer leaders are fully subsidized by the Center for Small Town Jewish life. We estimate the total value of the services we provide to each participating organization over the duration of this program to be approximately \$60,000. We expect organizations to make a contribution toward program costs in a manner consistent with the organization's resources, and we understand that some organizations can only make modest financial contributions.

Who should apply?

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 or other Jewish communal professional for a full-time (or nearly full-time) executive leadership position to start in Summer 2024, 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 board leadership in partnership with that professional.
- Is eager to serve all community members, not just those who pay dues.

- Has volunteer leaders who understand their organization's strengths and weaknesses and are eager to learn from past and present challenges.
- Has volunteer leaders committed to the program'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 education and/or experience appropriate to their role.
- Is eager to benefit from and contribute to a cohort-based learning experience designed for small Jewish communities.
- Is relatively new to serving small, rural, and/or remote Jewish communities in an executive role.
- 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, and we would be happy to have a conversation.

What's next?

Please visit <https://jewishlife.colby.edu/makom/> to complete a brief online application. The application for volunteer 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 selection committee. Professionals and volunteer leaders submit separate applications, either concurrently or sequentially (in either order). The selection committee will grant provisional acceptance into the Makom program 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 program's shared expectations.

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.