

MATANEL FOUNDATION

ACTIVITY REPORT

Program: *Matanel Global Leadership Fellowship*
Year: 2024-2025

Please present your activity report according to the following lines. The whole rapport will not exceed 2 or 3 pages (as word document).

Name of the Program: Matanel Global Leadership Fellowship

Year of activity: 2024-2025

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Number of active participants in the program: 15

Estimated number of impacted participants: 650

Give the actually state of the program (where the program stands at the date of the activity report, no more than ten lines):

The program was launched with a well-thought-out recruitment process which was held in December/January. After a process of nominations, applications and individual interviews we successfully recruited 15 students: seven from Israel, four from Poland, and four from the United States.

A great deal of thought and planning went into developing the curriculum which will address a wide range of issues from a diversity of perspectives. Four out of eight online learning sessions have been held (Please see 'Program Session Details' for more details), as well as the immersive Shabbaton held in Budapest from May 29 to 31. The remaining four online sessions are scheduled for the upcoming fall semester.

Fellows are currently working on their capstone projects and are on track to submit their first draft by August 25th. The projects reflect a wide range of formats, including lesson plans, new fellowships, essays, interviews, digital media, and ritual guides (Please see 'Capstone Project Outlines' for more details).

A mid-year evaluation was completed, with a 50% response rate. The results are overwhelmingly positive, as we await the remainder of the responses (see accompanying 'Evaluation Report'). The program received an article in the *Algemeiner* ([click to read](#)).

The main achievements during the last year of activity (main achievements, number of events, number of participants, etc.):

One of the most rewarding accomplishments of the Matanel Fellowship's pilot year was the formation of a truly diverse and committed cohort of 15 student leaders from Israel, the United States, and Poland. From the first session, fellows showed up not just on time—but fully present. They came prepared, asked thoughtful questions, and supported one another's journeys. Throughout the year, they explored the richness of Global Jewry through their own lived experiences. For one fellow from Poland, this meant stepping into a newly discovered Jewish identity. Others arrived with years of Jewish institutional background. Israeli participants often shared that they knew the words of blessings but not their relevance, while their international peers understood the intentions but were less familiar with the Hebrew. These differences led to some of the most meaningful moments of connection and learning.

A major milestone came in May with the immersive Shabbaton in Budapest (see attached schedule) —the first time the cohort met in person. Over three days, students visited Jewish heritage sites, participated in pluralistic Shabbat rituals, and engaged in powerful dialogue. According to post-program surveys, 86% of participants described the experience as positive or very positive.

What made the Shabbaton especially memorable was how much of it was student-led. Fellows didn't just attend—they led aspects of the weekend for their peers. Avihu (Israel) and Valeriia (Poland) opened with an icebreaker. Tsuf (Israel) gave their first-ever dvar Torah. Lily (USA) reframed Birkat Hamazon as a shared moment of gratitude. Others framed rituals like Kiddush and handwashing with their personal perspectives. Their leadership was thoughtful, creative, and deeply personal. The weekend became a turning point for many, sparking ideas and motivation for their final projects. One of the fellows, Gilad Schonberger (Israel) wrote a blog post for Hillel International about his experiences in the fellowship ([click to read](#)).

Another major achievement was the launch of the capstone projects. Their projects range from educational toolkits to short films, reflective essays, ritual guides, and community initiatives. (See 'Capstone Project Overview' document.). The final written components of the projects will be printed and disseminated at the end of 2025.

According to Esti and Esther, the program facilitators, this is where the fellows' leadership truly blossomed. What began as a brainstorming session in Budapest has grown into real-world initiatives. Examples include: Valeriia is bringing a pluralistic Shabbat model to Warsaw. Yan and Gabriela are collecting post-October 7 narratives from young Jews around the world. Yakira is crafting a ritual guide that weaves together global traditions. The capstone projects have become launching pads for acts of leadership, rooted in empathy, curiosity, and a genuine commitment to the Jewish future.

The evaluation (methodology, results, comparisons with the precedent year, conclusions for the future...):

As this is the pilot year of the Matanel Fellowship for Global Jewish Leadership, there is no precedent year for comparison. For the results of the mid-year evaluation, please see the Evaluation Report. A final evaluation will be analyzed at the end of the program.

Evaluations were assessed using Hillel Israel's ABC framework (Attitudes, Behaviors, and Cognitions). Quantitatively, we documented key indicators such as attendance at each session (virtual and in-person), number of projects developed as a direct result of the program, and the extent of student engagement across platforms. We also tracked how many fellows returned for subsequent activities, and how many are taking on leadership roles within Hillel or other Jewish pluralism/social change organizations. These metrics are analyzed and used to shape future programming. Qualitatively, the fellowship was designed to foster lasting changes in students':

- **Attitudes:** shifting perceptions of Judaism beyond a religious–secular binary; fostering care for global Jewish communities; deepening commitment to Jewish pluralism and to the relationship between Israeli and Diaspora Jews; and cultivating awareness of the challenges that Jews face around the world
- **Behaviors:** encouraging meaningful engagement with Jewish life and identity; initiating or participating in community and campus leadership; maintaining connections with global peers; and acting to promote pluralism and Jewish values.
- **Cognitions:** increasing Jewish literacy; developing deeper understanding of global Jewish communities and challenges; and strengthening their grasp of issues related to religion and state, global Jewry, and Peoplehood.

Provisional guide lines for the advancement of the program in the next year:

The current cohort will complete their final four learning sessions and present their capstone projects in Fall 2025. Recruitment for the next cohort is scheduled for October–November, with a December 2025 launch.

We will retain the core structure—monthly sessions, an immersive seminar, and a capstone project—while refining mentorship, pacing, and opportunities for peer leadership. Based on the strength of this year's projects, we will continue to emphasize creative, community-based expressions of Jewish Peoplehood and aim to publish select works.

Looking ahead, we plan to strengthen evaluation tools, begin building an alumni network, and increase the visibility of the fellowship across Hillel and global platforms.