



Cabinet on Aging

Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future
December 11, 2024





Community Connections

Community Connections Program Overview

Cabinet on Aging Presentation

December 11, 2024



Community Connections



Community Ambassadors from SeniorsPlus, Aroostook, and Eastern Area Agencies on Aging + Program Manager

Through this project, Maine's 5 Area Agencies on Aging have made **over 1,000 outreach connections** with communities across Maine, including **over 250 in-person meetings**.

At Eastern Area Agency on Aging alone, the Community Ambassador, funded by Community Connections, has **driven over 2,000 miles to connect with Age Friendly Communities, Community Members, Municipalities, and other organizations**.



Community Connections

AGENDA

1

AAAs + COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

2

SUCCESSSES OF THE WORK

3

LEARNINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

4

EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD

You'll hear from...

Carly Williams

Program Manager, Community Connections
Founder & Principal, Fiddlehead Strategies

Mary Hadlock

Community Ambassador, Southern Maine
Agency on Aging





Maine's 5 Area Agencies on Aging

Maine's Area Agencies are a core part of the fabric of supports for older Mainers.

They provide information, direct services, and resources to older adults (60+), adults with disabilities, and their care partners.



AAA Impact

- Serving Maine's most vulnerable populations for **over 50 years**
- **Served over 176,000 older adults and 1,870 family caregivers Oct 2022 - September 2023**
- **1,450 volunteers** serve nearly **100,000 volunteer hours annually**
- **Key services include:**
 - Meals on Wheels & Social Dining Sites
 - Medicare Counseling
 - Weekly Phone Call Programs
 - MoneyMinders
 - Information & Referrals
 - Adult Day Centers
 - Caregiver Information and Support

Maine's 5 Area Agencies on Aging



Older adults attend the Adult Day Program at SMAA

Community Connections @ the AAAs

- Hired 5 Community Ambassadors to conduct outreach
- Staff trainings to increase skills and capacity statewide
- Developed informational training and educational videos about the AAA services

Strong connections with communities is more important than ever:

- 52% of older Mainers who are single lack income to pay for basic needs
- 26% live alone
- 21% self-report “fair to poor health”

Source: Meals on Wheels of America. 2024. ME Fact Sheet, MOWA 2024. Accessed online at: MOWA fact sheets. (mealsonwheelsofamerica.org).



HIGHLIGHT 1:

Partnerships & Service Connections

Increased outreach and improved relationships statewide.

AAAs have learned so much about the Age Friendly Communities.

730+ resources shared by the Community Ambassadors with communities across Maine in the first 7 months of the grant.

"The Community Connector project has been a fabulous pilot to connect residents with resources, and connect those resources with outreach efforts on a local level. ...Larissa knows the roles of all the employees at EAAA, and has been **instrumental in helping to expand access to EAAA services to residents throughout Sullivan and the Schoodic area.**"

– *Candy Eaton, Coordinator at Age-Friendly Sullivan*

"Now that I've learned more about the Age Friendlies, I can look at our call log with each person who has reached out to us for help, and make notes for our resource specialists to refer them to AFCs if they live in an Age Friendly Community....**[Community Connections] has really expanded the ways we can connect people.**"

– *Larissa Heanssler, Community Ambassador*



HIGHLIGHT 2:

Shared Learning & Collaboration

Community Ambassadors work closely together as a cross-AAA team.

42 AAA staff members registered for 5-part Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion training series to build stronger cultural competency at AAAs.

15 AAA staff attended a public speaking training to improve how the AAAs can more effectively spread information about their work.

With this initiative...we know exactly who we're connecting them with, what kind of services are available, and can make a referral with a warm handoff.”

– *Mary Hadlock, SMAA Community Ambassador*

"I've worked at Spectrum Generations for 10 years, this is the first opportunity I've had to spend time getting to know staff from all roles at different agencies and hear about their work"

– *Jen Paquet (Healthy Living for ME, Spectrum Generations)*



Learnings & Recommendations

Recommendations

- Leverage and value qualitative data to measure the impact
- Continue the work beyond the pilot period
- Support continued investment in resource navigation services and guides

Learnings

- The need is great and this work is helping individuals and communities statewide
- Difficult to measure the ripple effects of relationship-building (self-referrals)
- Relationships and referral pipelines take time to build
- Gaps in cohesive, current resource hub as a state





Community Connections

***Thank you for investing in this
critical work to build stronger
connections between communities
and key services!***



Community Connections



Equipping and Energizing Age-Friendly Communities

Anna Guest, Program Manager, Community Connector Project
Patricia Oh, Asst. Director of Community Innovation & Research
University of Maine Center on Aging

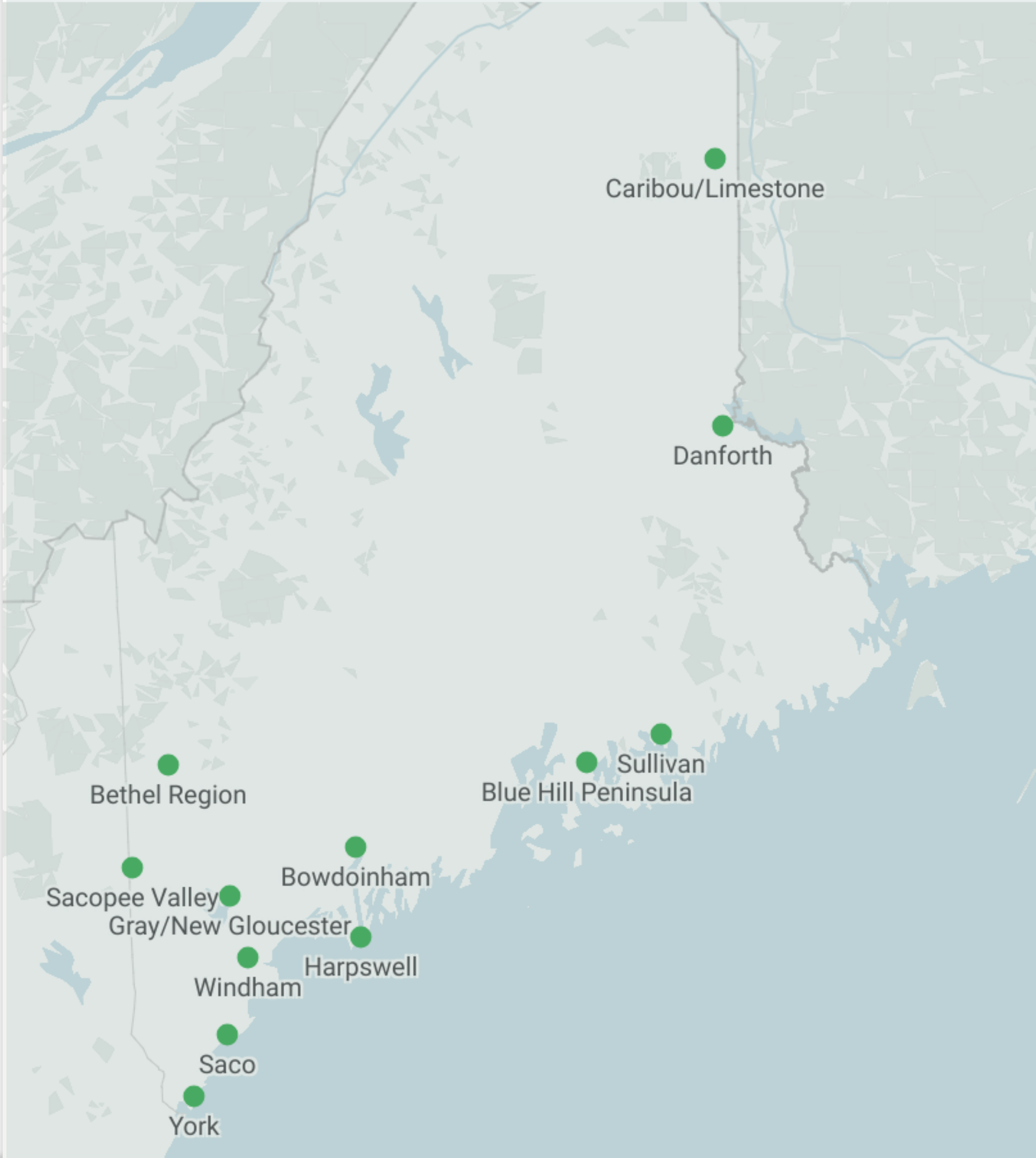
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Pilot Sites



- Overview
- Saco
- BLING – Gray/New Gloucester

[Learn more](#) about the 12 pilot sites



| Pictured: Map of pilot sites.
Created with Datawrapper

Pilot Sites – Initial Impact



September - November 2024



2,799

**People Attended
a Program**

15

New Projects Launched



addressing social, housing, transportation,
health and education needs



211

Partners Engaged

- Agencies on Aging
- Libraries
- Town Halls
- Parks & Rec
- Churches
- Food Pantries
- Healthcare
- Banks
- Local Businesses
and more!



72

**New Volunteers
Recruited**

175

**Links to
Resources**

local, regional, statewide

Pilot Site Spotlights



Joe Moreshead
Age Friendly Saco



Cindy Slocum
Building Livability in
New Gloucester

Age Friendly Saco Community Connections



- Transportation and food access for New Mainers
- Partnering for culturally appropriate emergency preparedness
- Home safety assessments



GNG Community Connectors

Community Needs



- Social Isolation/Loneliness
- Lack of information on community resources
- Economic insecurity and fragility of older adults



Strategies



Social Isolation

- Coffee hour and tea times

Lack of Information and resources

- Community wide mailer
- Programs with SMAA
- Connected with/partnered with GNG food pantries, veterans, others

Economic Insecurity/fragility

- One-on-one consultation on programs



Impact



Lori and I have:

- Referred people for home care through SMAA
- Connected people to LIHEAP and Efficiency Maine for rebate
- Referred people to NG Rides
- Educated many people about the Medicare Savings Program
- Referred people to local services for cleaning, snow removal, food pantry



Learnings



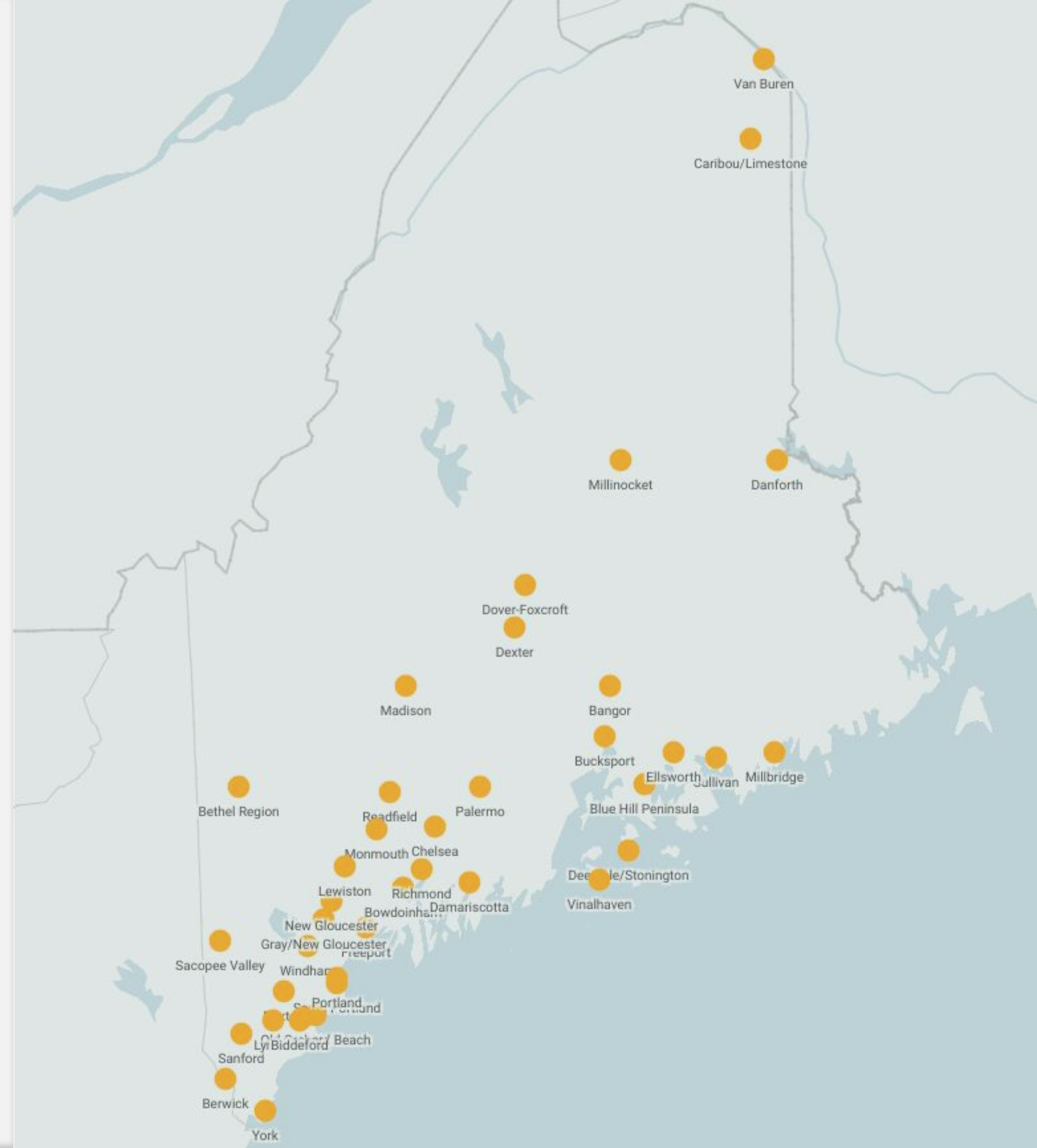
- Importance of human interaction and word of mouth
- Difficulty navigating the systems
- Knowing the right contacts
- Resources are often inaccessible or wait listed
- **The need is great!**



Additional Supports



- Skill Chapters
- Resource Connect Calls
- Grant Project



| Pictured: Map of funded communities.
Created with Datawrapper

Skill Building Chapters



- 14 Skill Chapters
- Adult Learning Styles
- Certificate

To view the series:

www.lifelongmaine.org/resources/cc-skills

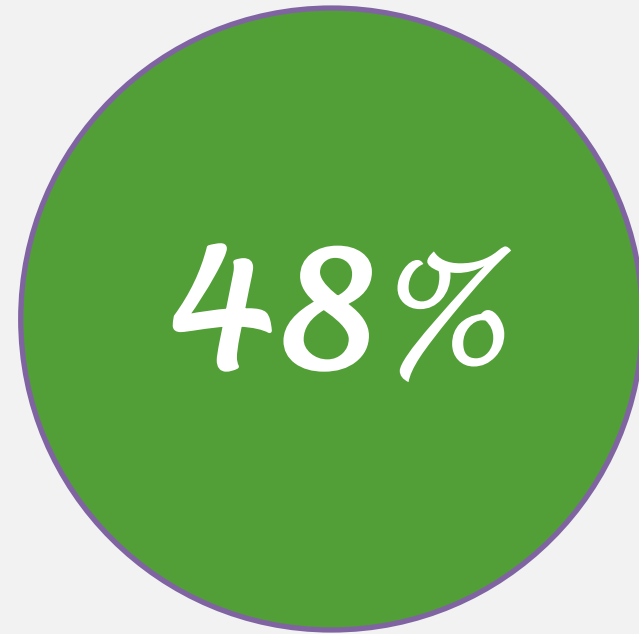
Skill Chapters

- Advocacy
- Ageism
- Area Agencies on Aging
- Boundaries
- Confidentiality
- Dementia Inclusion
- Diversity
- Elder Abuse
- Grant Writing
- Identifying Local Resources
- Mental Health and Aging
- Metrics and Evaluation
- Partnering for Success
- Working with Volunteers

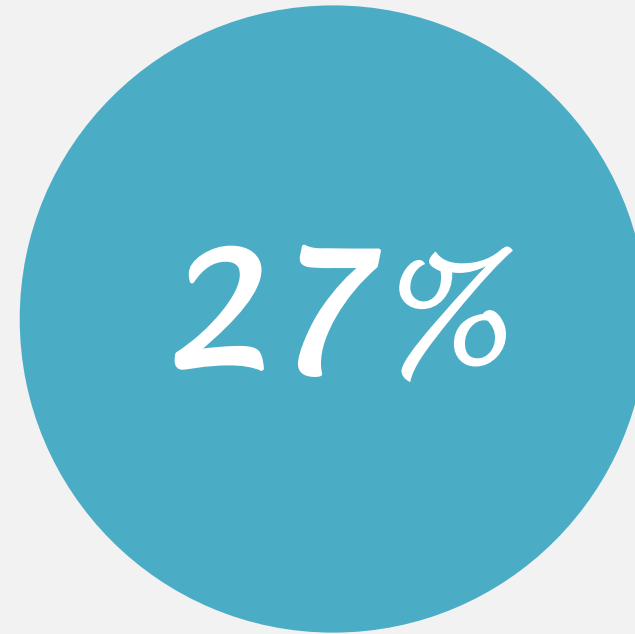
In Development

- Helping Conversations
- Hoarding
- End of Life Planning

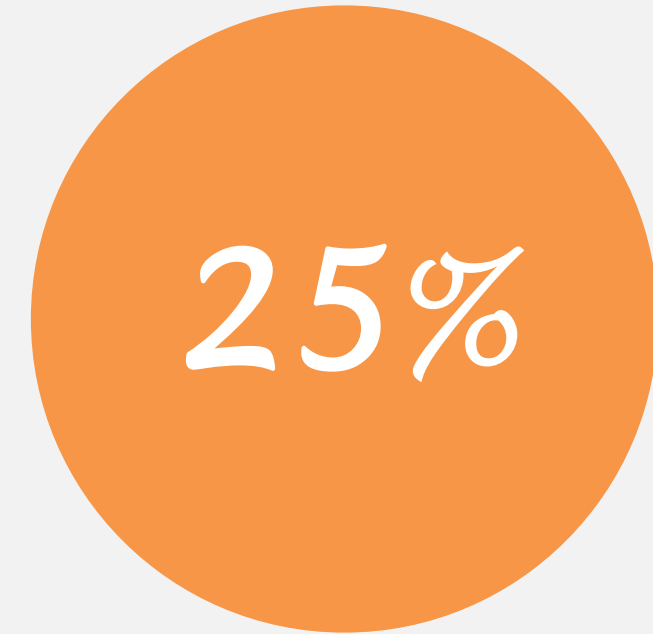
Mini-Grants



New Activities



Infrastructure



Capacity Building

40 Funded Communities with 1-3 projects each
Total funding – \$329,991.20 (\$1500 – \$20,000)

Equipping and Energizing Communities

Mini-Grants (47 projects)



- **14** Emergency/disaster preparedness
- **9** Improvements to public spaces
- **8** Social connection
- **5** Volunteer transportation
- **5** Health and safety
- **4** Housing
- **2** Community communications



Awarded Lifelong Maine Community Connections Grant

PLANS TO OPEN AN AGING WELL RESOURCE CENTER IN 2025

On November 20, 2024, we-the Executive Committee of Berwick for a Lifetime- were informed that we were one of 40 communities to receive a Community Connections mini-grant. With it, we plan to establish an Aging Well Resource Center. The grant decision was made by a panel of judges, including the Governor's Cabinet on Aging. We at Berwick for a Lifetime are grateful for the support of Lifelong Maine at UMaine, and we are honored to receive this grant. We are proud to be one of the towns in the State of Maine to have achieved this milestone.



Who is Berwick for a Lifetime?
We are an age-friendly volunteer group in Berwick, Maine that seeks to support the needs of Berwick's residents through multi-generational programming.

What do you plan to do with the grant money?

We recognize the need for helping older adults and caregivers in our area navigate technical challenges. We aim to connect people with accessible online services, social opportunities, and resources that will support them in maintaining happy, healthy, and community-engaged lives. One way we will seek to help is to invest in laptops and accessories that will be easily accessible through our partnership with the Berwick Public Library. We will offer one-on-one help in

Thank you for investing in Maine communities

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