

2021 Community Responsive Grants Program Projects

Aroostook County Action Program, Inc.

Aroostook County's Project RIGHT (Rural Initiative to Grow Housing Transitions)

Planning Grant: Aroostook County Action Program's (ACAP) project seeks to assess, design, and implement safe and affordable housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness in Aroostook County. ACAP will seek to learn more about the needs in the community and the available resources to inform the development of a supportive housing project in the central region of Aroostook County. A stakeholder group, shaping the project, includes a diverse group of community members including those with lived experience of homelessness. In addition to the voice of those community stakeholders, ACAP has also identified the need to bring in experts in this area as this would be the first supportive housing project in Aroostook County.

Geographical Area(s) Served: Aroostook

Community(ties) of Focus: People experiencing homelessness in Aroostook County

Defend Our Health

Healthy Housing for New Mainers

Planning Grant: Defend Our Health, in partnership with the Greater Portland Immigrant Welcome Center and the Rwandan Community Association, will develop a train-the-trainer program and associated linguistically diverse materials to help provide essential information on health hazards associated with housing. Recent immigrants, including refugees fleeing persecution and violence, too often tragically find themselves and their children facing serious health risks from their Maine homes. Lead based paint, asthma triggers, and carbon monoxide risks are all more prevalent in older rental homes. In communities with similar housing stock, studies have shown blood lead levels actually increase in many refugee children in the months following their resettlement in the US. In addition to the train-the-trainer and materials, trained leaders will serve as connectors and organizers, helping to have health hazards addressed by landlords, municipal, and state government.

Geographic Area(s) Served: Cumberland, York

Community(ies) Served: Refugees and immigrants

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Hand in Hand/ Mano en Mano

Bilingual Health Equity and Community Wellness Advocate

Project Grant: Hand in Hand/ Mano en Mano's project will fund a Bilingual Health Equity & Community Wellness Advocate to support community members to overcome barriers they face in accessing and navigating healthcare services, develop community leaders' capacity, and provide wellness programming focusing on racial justice. This position will work alongside local clinics to create a Welcome Plan based in racial equity and language justice. The advocate will also provide training and workshops designed to educate facilities on the available resources, and focus care in racial equity in order to make community members feel welcome and safe. Additionally, this position will help establish and collaborate with members of a Community Wellness Leadership Board to plan wellness events and develop local leaders' capacities to realize future events.

Geographic Area(s) Served: Aroostook, Hancock, Knox, Penobscot, Waldo, Washington

Community(ies) Served: Immigrants, migrant workers, and farmworkers, the majority of whom are from Latinx and indigenous communities residing in rural Washington County

Healthy Peninsula

Age-Friendly Planning After COVID

Planning Grant: Healthy Peninsula's planning process will formalize a community-engaged planning structure, re-assess priority needs of older, underserved community members in the service area, and refine the activities of the Age-Friendly Coastal Communities (AFCC) Action Plan (a community project coordinated by Healthy Peninsula) to design responsive programming to improve access to and information about health and health care, as well as services addressing the social determinants of health in a post-COVID environment. The planning process will involve re-convening the AFCC Coordinating Council, recruiting and supporting an engaged Community Leadership Council, soliciting feedback from individuals, focus groups, and service providers on the existing Action Plan priorities and how they should be re-framed given ongoing realities of the pandemic, and designing interventions and projects that can be implemented with the leadership, support, and participation of service recipients, providers, and volunteers.

Geographic Area(s) Served: Blue Hill Peninsula and Deer Isle/Stonington, in Hancock County

Community(ies) Served: Older adults in the nine towns of the coastal, rural Blue Hill Peninsula and Deer Isle, particularly older adults who are medically underserved, isolated, and/or low income

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In Her Presence

Using Our Skills – Harnessing an Untapped Resource to Meet Health Professional Needs in Maine

Project Grant: In Her Presence's (IHP) Using Our Skills project engages immigrant, refugee, and asylum-seeking health professionals as part of the solution for reducing health inequities in Maine. Led by members from the community, IHP aims to harness this untapped health workforce to improve health outcomes of immigrant and underserved Mainers. A "one stop shop" for information on reestablishing health professional careers in Maine will be created, mentors will be paired with Foreign Trained Health Professionals to help them achieve their employment goals, and leaders from within the community will take a seat at the table with relevant stakeholders and policy makers to advocate for systems changes to ensure that no health professional skills go unused.

Geographic Area(s) Served: Cumberland

Community(ies) Served: Members of the Maine refugee, immigrant, and asylum-seeking communities with previous training and experience as health professionals in their countries of origin

Maine Access Points

Bridging Access to Peer-Led Harm Reduction Education in Maine's Rural Communities

Project Grant: Maine Access Points' (MAP) project will facilitate the implementation of peer-led harm reduction education to reach individuals who have been isolated from harm reduction care due to geographic and social isolation and lack of services. It will provide education on overdoses, safe use practices, health, safe sex, and reproductive justice, while also serving as a platform for information dissemination of resources including local and statewide community partners. Project objectives will include hiring and maintaining a Peer Education Coordinator; creating a peer-education team; providing accessible harm reduction educational opportunities virtually through video streaming and social media; providing ongoing peer education and access to health-related program literature at in-person syringe access programs and through MAP's mail delivery program; implementing monthly, virtual harm reduction drop-in hours for program participants; and evaluating the effectiveness of this project through peer-educator and participant surveys, peer-educator interviews, as well as analysis of data collection.

Geographic Area(s) Served: Statewide

Community(ies) Served: People who use drugs in Maine, specifically those who experience geographic and social isolation and who have experienced barriers in accessing harm reduction services, health care, and treatment options

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Maine Equal Justice

All Means All: Coverage for Adult Immigrants in Maine

Project Funding: Maine Equal Justice (MEJ), working in collaboration with the All Means All Steering Committee, the Leadership Team (LT) of impacted people, and other stakeholders, will develop, design, and execute the next phase of a shared campaign to close the gap in health coverage for immigrants, regardless of their immigration status, in Maine. The work will be led by a LT of impacted people who will share their need for health care through personal stories, and work with MEJ policy advocates and others on the Steering Committee to develop advocacy strategies. MEJ's organizing team will work with partners and community members to identify and add members to the LT, and work with LT members to develop and share their stories. MEJ will develop and launch a public information campaign to support the narrative that coverage for all helps us all, and bring additional voices to the campaign like employers and health care providers.

Geographic Area(s) Served: Statewide

Community(ies) Served: Adult Immigrants who remain ineligible for Medicaid

Maine Inside Out

The Landing Spot

Planning Grant: Maine Inside Out's (MIO) project aims to design a holistic and innovative model of re-entry support for incarcerated young people and their families. This model will be piloted at MIO's first community site in Lewiston and scaled to MIO's future community sites in Biddeford, Portland, and Waterville. The planning process will engage system-impacted youth, their families, and community partners, who offer social services, recovery supports, health and mental health care. Youth and families will engage in individual conversations and group workshops to reflect on their personal experiences of re-entry, physical and mental health crises, perceptions of health care and access, system navigation, and peer support. The visioning process will interweave story-telling and art in a creative exploration of how social conditions and access to services impact wellbeing and health outcomes. By identifying critical moments of personal decision-making or external impact in the various narratives, project facilitators will highlight inflection points to address in the design of The Landing Spot.

Geographic Area(s) Served: Statewide, Androscoggin

Community(ies) Served: Young people and families impacted by the criminal justice system

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Mindbridge

Healing Racial Trauma Initiative (HRTI)

Planning Grant: Mindbridge's project will research, design and build program mechanisms to implement a Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) community-informed therapeutic model to heal racial trauma and promote models of community health and wellness. Funding will support a Healing Racial Trauma Initiative Fellow, who will play an integral role in program planning and the facilitation of community outreach. Other project strategies include conducting a comprehensive literature review, developing an initial integrative syllabus of trauma-informed practices and possibilities of community engagement, designing and implementing a Landscape and Opportunity Analysis (LOA) to determine needs and partnership opportunities, developing educational content and program resources for collaborators and mental health providers, and developing a final report and implementation plan for the HRTI.

Geographic Area(s) Served: Statewide

Community(ies) Served: BIPOC Communities

New England Arab American Organization

Beit Jedi (House of my Grandfather): Building Resilience Among Arab and Muslim Men

Project Funding: New England Arab American Organization (NEAAO) will pilot a program to deliver culturally appropriate behavioral health resources and information to Arab and Muslim men. The paradigm for this new program is the Middle Eastern teahouse where men gather to play board games, listen to music, and talk about personal and global issues. NEAAO will create a safe, educational environment free of stigma where men can discuss issues critical to mental health and wellbeing--raising children, work, family obligations, grieving for home, lack of sleep--and receive information and resources from experts who can address issues of mental and behavioral health, including trauma, with sensitivity. NEAAO will also deliver trainings to organizations with a stake in community and behavioral health, which will increase access to culturally appropriate services for Arab and Muslim men in southern Maine.

Geographic Area(s) Served: Cumberland, Kennebec, York

Community(ies) Served: Middle Eastern and Northern African men

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Northern Light Health

Workforce Development for Immigrant and New Mainer Populations in the Health Care Profession

Project Grant: Northern Light Health (NLH) and its local member health care organizations, in partnership with community agencies, will provide comprehensive health care career navigation and support for individuals from Maine's immigrant and New Mainer communities via a dedicated Workforce Development Outreach Coordinator. The outreach coordinator will support ongoing development of an equitable and culturally responsive workforce training and navigation program, specifically tailored to meet the needs of immigrant employees and applicants with the goal of supporting long-term employment and advancement through career ladders by facilitating engagement, retention, education, and professional development pathways that address identified health care demands in Cumberland County, and beyond. Community partners representing immigrant led organizations will be supported with grant funds to promote access to the program curriculum and activities for interested individuals. Funded access activities may include the written, video, or audio translation of program materials. Funds may also be used by partners to support immigrant-led meeting facilitation and active outreach to prospective immigrant employees.

Geographic Area(s) Served: Cumberland, Statewide

Community(ies) Served: Immigrant and New Mainer populations, and indigenous populations native to other states and territories, who are interested in joining Maine's health care workforce

OUT Maine

Making Maine's Health and Mental Health Services Accessible, Equitable, and Inclusive for LGBTQ+ Youth

Project Grant: OUT Maine's project will improve our health systems' equity and inclusivity for Maine's transgender youth by building and disseminating resources identified as critical by transgender youth as well as by the targeted professionals themselves. The initiative also will develop professional educational content and training, as well as a resource toolkit targeted to mental health practitioners who work with transgender youth.

OUT Maine will collaborate with the Maine chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics to 1) ensure that these educational resources and trainings meet the needs of pediatric and family practice providers (through focus groups and surveys to hone the development phase) and 2) disseminate these materials across the state through written educational media as well as clinical trainings collaboratively designed to meet the providers' needs and jumpstart improvements in health and mental health care providers' practices.

Geographic Area(s) Served: Statewide

Community(ies) Served: Transgender youth in Maine

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Penobscot Bay YMCA

Voices From Knox County - Pathways to Equity and Belonging

Project Grant: The Penobscot Bay YMCA will create a project that focuses on the development of a discharge planning system and soft hand off to community resources to be implemented at the Knox County Jail, and on decreasing the stigma associated with incarceration and addiction. The project relies on a dedicated team of “Community Consultants,” individuals with lived experience, who are compensated for their time and help to guide the project. While previous efforts have put a discharge planning system and linkages to existing services in place, community partners with lived experience have identified a need to continue to develop, expand, and strengthen that system, including more supports for employment. Further, the project will work to reduce incarceration-related stigma, especially among employers, through several presentations and activities in partnership with the local Sheriff and Chamber of Commerce.

Geographic Area(s) Served: Knox

Community(ies) Served: Incarcerated citizens

Restorative Justice Institute of Maine

Collaborating to Build Community Resilience

Project Grant: Restorative Justice Institute of Maine (RJIM) will work in Cumberland, Oxford, Androscoggin, York, and Kennebec Counties facilitating restorative and transformative justice processes with people under the age of 25 and the community members around them. The project includes the creation of a BIPOC-led advisory committee, consisting of young people, many of whom are formerly incarcerated, and RJIM facilitators from those specific counties, as well as parents, families, community healers, and local leaders. All members will be given stipends for their participation and will have the opportunity for intense dialogue and restorative conversation. These advisory committees will identify the needs of the counties RJIM serves, specifically, the needs of those in marginalized communities. RJIM will provide opportunities for training in facilitation and restorative processes, so that community members have a more complete understanding of what restorative justice is and how they can implement it in their own communities. RJIM will also create more opportunities for facilitation by training community members as facilitators.

Geographic Area(s) Served: Androscoggin, Cumberland, Kennebec, Oxford, York

Community(ies) Served: Young people under the age of 25 with high exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences, marginalized identities, disproportionate contact with police and other manifestations of the carceral system, and/or lived experience of poverty

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SafeBAE

SafeBAE Certified Schools Program

Project Grant: SafeBAE will pilot a new evidence-informed approach to improving prevention, education, and response to sexual violence and harassment in middle and high schools in order to reduce suicide, negative mental health impacts, and substance abuse among survivors who are re-traumatized by poor school response due to a lack of proper training. SafeBAE intends to continue partnerships with districts and students throughout Southern Maine, as well as aligned direct service agencies. The project includes working directly with partner schools throughout Southern Maine to continue to train more students as peer educators, grow the SafeBAE club school chapters, provide schools with a comprehensive consent curriculum, train staff in trauma-informed victim response and Title IX protocols, and help districts to create a survivor-centered sexual misconduct policy.

Geographic Area(s) Served: Androscoggin, Cumberland

Community(ies) Served: Middle and high school students in Southern Maine

Town of Mount Vernon Aging in Place Committee

Regional Expansion of a Program Addressing Medical, Mental Health & Safety Needs of Citizens Aging in Place

Project Grant: The Town of Mount Vernon Aging in Place (AIP) Committee's project includes two major components. The first is to develop the existing model of health outreach now operating in Mount Vernon and partly in Vienna in which volunteers are supported by a licensed social worker and to afford better training of outreach workers, more frequent case reviews, and more direct, informed involvement of Town officials when they must act on particularly difficult cases involving the health and safety of seniors. Second, expand the geographic scope of the model so it covers Vienna fully and also all of Fayette, transition the effort over a two year period from operating under the aegis of Mount Vernon's AIP Committee to a regional or "tri-town" agency representing all three towns (who already share a food bank, Health Officer, and Rescue Service), and establish the basis for the agency's long- term sustainability, possibly as a 501(c)3 better able to source community donations as well as external grants.

Geographic Area(s) Served: Kennebec County; Towns of Fayette, Mount Vernon, Vienna

Community(ies) Served: Inhabitants of Mount Vernon, Vienna, and Fayette 55 & older who struggle to access medical and mental health services

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Wabanaki Public Health and Wellness

Elder Support Services

Project Grant: Wabanaki Public Health and Wellness's (WPHW) project will create accessible community programming disrupted by COVID-19 to renew community connections, with an emphasis on sustainable elder supports, across the five Wabanaki communities. This will include hiring an Elder Services Coordinator to implement changes based on the 2020 Voices of Our Elders survey responses in the five Wabanaki communities and in response to acute needs associated with COVID-19. This grant opportunity will allow WPHW to further 2020 Voices of Our Elders work by assisting all five communities in revisiting the results and planning/coordinating responses to their needs. The Elder Services Coordinator will work with the Public Health Research Institute (PHRI), to identify additional issues that arose and continue to be present during the COVID-19 pandemic such as social isolation, lack of access to in-person or telemedicine appointments, and limited cultural/language opportunities, and then work to incorporate adaptations and solutions to mitigate the effects of these issues.

Geographic Area(s) Served: Aroostook, Penobscot, Washington

Community(ies) Served: The five tribal communities in Maine: Aroostook Band of Micmacs; Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians; Penobscot Nation; Passamaquoddy at Indian Township; and Passamaquoddy at Pleasant Point