



Maine Service Instigators: Be the change!

Service Project Support Grants focus on food insecurity

This service project support grant (\$750-\$1,000) for Maine Service Instigators challenges groups of middle and high school-aged youth to 1) investigate the root causes of hunger and food-insecurity in their communities; and 2) design and conduct a service project related to what they discover. Projects must be completed by May 2, 2021 and a report of the effort submitted by May 21, 2021. To be eligible for consideration, an application must be submitted by a nonprofit, school district, or public agency associated with the youth group. No awards will be made to individuals. The application deadline is March 5, 2021 and directions for submitting proposals are later in this document.

Like so many issues facing community residents, food insecurity requires two kinds of responses. The first is about compassion for our neighbors whose resources do not cover basic needs, especially food. The second response arises out of understanding the causes of food insecurity. Is it job loss? Is it fixed retirement income? Is it the nutrition needs of chronic illnesses or medical costs that get priority in household budgets? Exactly how much and what types of food will SNAP (\$2.40 per meal) or WIC cover? The complexity of food-insecurity means there are many, many questions to ask and issues to understand.

More than one third of Maine's households are have incomes below living-wage, meaning they are either experiencing or at risk for experiencing hunger. 40% of these households include seniors and more than half of them are in the most rural counties – Aroostook and Washington. That is 185,000 people in our state who live with food insecurity. All these issues have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic that resulted in many people becoming unemployed or losing hours at their jobs.

Who are Service Instigators?

Service Instigators are Maine youth groups who learn-by-doing the skills needed to understand and solve community problems through service. Under the guidance of mentors or advisors, they contribute to the quality of community life and begin to engage as active citizens in the many facets of civic life.

Sponsors

This program is co-sponsored by Volunteer Maine (the state service commission) and the Maine Masonic Charitable Foundation.



Volunteer Maine's mission is to foster and inspire community service and volunteerism to address critical needs in the State of Maine. As the state service commission, the agency builds capacity and sustainability in Maine's volunteer and service communities by funding programs, developing managers of volunteers, raising awareness of sector issues, and promoting service as a strategy to resolve community issues.

The mission of the Maine Masonic Charitable Foundation is to support various programs throughout the State of Maine, and beyond when appropriate, that will enhance the lives of individuals and communities with Masonic ties. There are over 180 Masonic Lodges across Maine. Freemasonry is a worldwide fraternity of men who are looking to improve themselves and their communities.



Both sponsors believe service to the community

- is a fundamental building block of a civil society;
- cultivates a sense of personal and civic responsibility;
- is a strategy for solving a range of community problems; and,
- is a lifelong habit that can be most easily acquired early in life.

The Selection Committee will choose up to 8 proposals to receive awards of \$750-\$1,000 to support planning and carrying out a youth-driven service project. Proposals will be selected using criteria outlined later in this document.

Award recipients are strongly urged to invite the local Masonic Lodge to be a partner or participate in the January 20 event. To identify the leadership in your area, contact the Maine Masonic Charitable Foundation Executive Director, Susan Scacchi at director@masoniccharitablefoundation.org. [CLICK HERE to see Maine Lodges near you.](#)

Six Steps to a Service Instigators' Project

The **first** step is to understand food insecurity in the community. What causes it? What the effects are on individuals and the community? What resources and actions are local, state, and federal governments or nonprofits directing at the problem? Mentors/advisors help youth figure out who to ask about the issue and what age-appropriate media or reading is available to help the group learn. Mentors/advisors also facilitate age-appropriate conversations or reflections about how food insecurity impacts their neighbors and community.

Second, the youth identify an aspect of food insecurity they want to impact and research all sides of the issue in the community so they understand what sustains it, what could change it, and what can be done in the short term to mitigate the impact.

Third, youth review what they've learned about the issue and select an action strategy to begin mitigating the impact of the issue. This launches the project planning for a project to be completed by May 2, 2021 that engages the community both within and outside the school. At this point, the young people decide what blend of action/education and direct volunteer service action their project will have.

Fourth, the young people determine what community partners might support their effort. Are there other organizations working on the same issue? Are there community members – individuals, businesses, nonprofits, municipal offices – who share their concern? Among the people living with food insecurity, who might like to be

involved because change would mean so much to them? They reach out to these potential partners and supporters to engage them in carrying out the project.

Fifth, students prepare to execute the project by

- identifying tasks to be accomplished not only on the day of the event but in this preparation phase,
- listing resources needed to carry out the tasks (location, people, materials, supplies, transportation, safety training or equipment, technology to document event, etc.),
- assigning preparation tasks to peers and community partners who are helping,
- describing opportunities for community volunteers to help on the day and communicating those through local media,
- developing a “Plan B” in case issues arise, like the weather does not cooperate or COVID-19 numbers make even small gatherings unsafe.

Sixth, students and their partners along with community volunteers implement their service plan, document the process and the results, report the results to their partners and the volunteers, show appreciation to supporters, and reflect on what they learned in the experience.

Types of Assistance

- **Cash Awards.** Up to 8 awards will be made. Applicants may request between \$750 and \$1,000 to cover Service Instigator project activities. These cash awards are intended to support learning, service project planning, implementation, and documentation/reporting.

NOTE: Award recipients will be asked to report the value of all donated services and materials they receive. This information helps the foundation understand to what extent its contribution was able to “leverage” other resources. Statements of time donated by speakers or volunteers, receipts showing the value of donated supplies/materials, and statements of the value of space used or donated mileage/transportation costs are examples of resource documentation to be submitted.

- **Unallowable Expenses:** The award funds may not be used to fund religious instruction/worship/proselytization; speakers’ honoraria or fees; celebrations or banquets; or other activity not connected with actual student planning or community volunteer service. Although celebrations, parades, and recognition ceremonies may be a part of the activities that you plan, those activities will have to be underwritten by other community donations.
- **Payment Schedule for Awards:** Awards will be paid in two amounts. The 90% will be paid upon completion of the third step (review of learning and selection of action strategy) and submission of both a brief description of youth progress-to-date and invoice. The report of progress may be written by students as part of the experience. The final 10% will be paid upon submission of the final project report on or before May 21, 2021.
- **State and National Promotion of Local Projects:** The Commission will use information provided by grant recipients to promote Maine’s service projects to state and national media. The Commission will coordinate local media promotion with the award recipient and assist if requested.
- **Project planning resource materials:** Grant recipients will receive resources and materials about hunger and food insecurity in Maine to help begin the conversation around the issues.

Award Criteria

Applications will be assessed using the following selection criteria:

1. Plan and timeline for student/youth project planning, preparation, and implementation (65%)
2. Applicant Organization's Capacity (10%)
3. Budget Adequacy and Cost (25%)

Reflection Activity Tips

Over and over, research has shown that reflection is the step that helps people tie a service experience to personal learning and awareness. Reflection increases the impact on the person who serves. It's the added "gift" you can give students/youth, partners, and volunteers.

Reflection is usually scheduled for the end of the project event. It can be small group discussion over snacks but it can also take the form of interviews by teams of "reporters" who record individuals' thoughts electronically. (Great material for a video final report!) A creative or craft person might devise a way for participants to reflect their insights artistically. Whatever form you give to your volunteers' reflection activity, be sure to pose some thoughtful questions and give them time to mull over the answers.

Here are some questions that you can use to help people focus and reflect. Feel free to pick and choose.

- What did you expect the experience would be like? What was different from your expectations?
- What did you know about this issue before working on this project? What did you learn that made the biggest impression on you?
- What else could be done to change this issue? Do volunteers have a role in addressing it?
- During the service, what did you see or hear or notice that will remain with you as a memory of the time?

Timeline

March 5, 2021	Applications due by 4pm local time.
March 15, 2021	Announcement of awards made.
March 22-25, 2021	Process the award paperwork. (Recipients must be available during this period to sign documents and return them promptly!)
April 1 – 12, 2021	Reports on student/youth progress and invoice for payment due. Address for submission will be in award paperwork.
No later than April 23, 2021	Payments made to award recipients. Note that reports and invoices will be processed as they are received.
May 2, 2021	All Service Instigator food insecurity projects completed.
May 21, 2021	Project reports due so that Maine activities can be included in national press and reporting.

Application Content and Instructions due March 5, 2021

Applications for the service project award must be submitted **online**. Deadline for submitting is March 5, 2021 by 4pm. The link for the online form is located at VolunteerMaine.gov or at this internet address:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/X8BKPVC>

A template showing the fields and questions in the online form is attached as Appendix A. Budgets must show formula calculations for items. Two examples are here:

8 hours hall rental @ \$10/hour = \$80

100 copies X \$0.05 = \$5.00

Project Selections and Award Decisions

All applications for funds will be assessed by a panel of reviewers many with expertise in volunteer service projects. They will read and rate each proposal using the criteria and traits described above. The maximum possible score is 100. Awards will be made to the highest-scoring proposals.

The decision of the award selection panel regarding the award is a final decision of Volunteer Maine.

Final Project Report Requirements due May 21, 2021.

All award recipients will be required to submit a project report by May 21, 2021.

The report has two parts: experience and financial.

The experience portion describes was accomplished both in terms of what participants learned and service project results. Service project results should report what was done, where, how many people volunteered, how much was accomplished, and what impact the project had on the community. The report may be written or a video or an electronic portfolio story-book.

The financial portion lists actual expenditures to document use of the funds and the leveraged services, supplies, or other support the project used.

Appendix A: Questions in online application form

Applicants may want to prepare the answers in a word processing document and just cut/paste them into the form. This would avoid any loss of information if your internet service is disrupted.

1. Applicant organization information

Contact Name, Title, Sponsoring Organization/Agency, Address, City, State, Zip Code, County, Email, Phone

2. Second project contact information, if applicable (same as above)

3. Applying organization's EIN

4. Briefly describe the youth/student group who will undertake the Service Instigator project. Include how many, age range, the common tie (in the same class, belong to same youth group, etc.) that ensures teamwork, and COVID safety strategies that will allow them to work together.

5. Identify and describe the specific adults (names, relationship to students, experience with advising on projects) who will guide the students through the planning and implementation of the Maine Youth Act project.

6. Describe how and when students/youth will be introduced to hunger and food insecurity; the situations that create the issue, and the current actions being taken. Include the plan for giving students time to reflect on how this concept connects to their lives and community.

7. Outline completion dates for the six steps and describe the indicators of completion.

8. Describe when and how as well as who will be responsible for leading a structured reflection for youth/students and community participants after completion of the project by May 2nd.

9. Provide the anticipated date(s) for the student lead project.

10. Provide evidence the applicant organization is an eligible entity as described in the instructions. Describe the applicants experience in managing small grant projects and service by students. Provide a description of how the school/organization financial office will document match.

11. Please prepare your budget using the table on the next page. Save the page as its own document in either Microsoft Word DOC, or DOCX format so you can upload it into the application. (I.e., the file should be 1 page with only your budget table.) To ensure file handling is smooth, use the applicant organization name as the file name.

Maine Service Instigators Project Budget

Name of Applicant Organization:

EIN: _____

Name of Primary Contact on the Application:

In this table, document your anticipated expenses in the budget form.

Budget Item Description and Calculation	Charge to Awarded Funds
Grand Totals	

Save only this page as its own document in either DOC, DOCX, or PDF format so you can upload it into the application. (I.e., the file should be 1 page with only your budget table.) To ensure file handling is smooth, use the applicant organization name as the file name.