

Cabinet on Aging

Meeting Minutes: December 11, 2025

Commissioners Fortman and Gagne-Holmes welcomed the Cabinet members, staff, and presenters. The agenda for this meeting was to hear about the work that is part of the Cabinet's Community Connections pilot.

Brief Overview of Community Connections

A brief description and purpose for the pilot was provided by Elizabeth Gattine, the Cabinet Coordinator.

- This program is funded through Section 9817 ARPA, with an original end date of 3/31/2025. It is now anticipated that the end date will be extended through 6/30/2025 and the contracting process for that is underway.
- The goal of the project is to align strategies and activities at the state, regional and local levels to support older adults and create stronger communities for all. This includes breaking down siloes, leveraging respective skills and expertise, and avoiding duplication of efforts.
- Activities fit within the 3 primary goal areas of the Cabinet: creating sustainable living, enhancing community connections, and supporting employment and volunteer opportunities.
- Community Connections includes pilot communities that support a stipended volunteer to help connect people to resources, technical assistance and training, and mini grants.

Partnership with State and Area Agencies on Aging

Elizabeth Gattine provided examples of State agency staff actively participating in exchanging resources and information on relevant programming and services.

Carly Williams of Southern Maine Area Agency on Aging described the role of the Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and specifically, that of the Community Ambassadors. Having this role has increased outreach and improved relationships statewide. Some examples included:

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

Mary Hadlock, the Community Ambassador for SMAA, provided a description of her role and an example of a situation where an older caregiver was referred to SMAA because of the partnership with an age friendly community.

Community Connector Pilot Sites

Anna Guest, Program Manager at UMaine Center on Aging, provided an overview of the 12 pilot sites (see accompanying PowerPoint) and the initial impacts in the first three months. Examples included:

- 2800 people attending a program connected to Community Connections.
- Over 200 partners engaged.
- 72 new volunteers recruited.

Pilots collaborate and exchange information and have been supported through technical assistance and infrastructure such as Zoom, printers, and help with data collection.

Joe Moreshead from Saco and Cindy Slocum from New Gloucester provided additional detail and examples of their work as Community Connectors. Saco has focused on transportation and food access for New Mainers; partnering for culturally appropriate emergency preparedness; and home safety assessments. New Gloucester has identified strategies to needs that include social Isolation/loneliness, a lack of information on community resources, and economic insecurity and fragility of older adults.

Training Modules

14 skills training modules have been developed and are available at the Lifelong Maine website: [Community Connections Skills Training](#)

Additional training development is anticipated.

Mini grants

There were over 40 grants be awarded across the state to Age-Friendly Lifelong communities, ranging in grant awards from \$1,500 to \$20,000. 25% are capacity building; 27% are infrastructure; 48% are for a new project or activity.

An overview of project areas:

14 Emergency/disaster preparedness

9 Improvements to public spaces

8 Social connections

5 Volunteer transportation

5 Health and safety

4 Housing

2 Community communications

This has led to a peer learning group of communities to exchange resources and best practices on emergency preparedness and disaster planning.

