COMMUNITY CONNECTORS

September 2024 - June 2026

A PARTNERSHIP WITH MAINE GWEP AND THE GOVERNOR'S CABINET ON AGING

THE CHALLENGE

64% of older Mainers live in rural areas–far from information about needed resources. They turn to local trusted sources for information

Local social and recreational opportunities are critical for older Mainers to remain active and engaged

Age-Friendly Communities have formed trusting relationships but lack capacity for one-on-one resource navigation

THE CONNECTOR APPROACH

1 **Local Knowledge & State Resources**

Connectors are trusted neighbors who receive training on statewide programming.

2 **Multi-Sector Partnerships**

Local resources - businesses, service groups, municipal resources - and state & regional agencies

3 **Peer Learning Network**

Bi-weekly check-ins & quarterly statewide resource calls

CONNECTOR IMPACT

Across 12 pilot sites in just 21 months:

OLDER MAINERS REACHED

1,692 Connected to services

28,118 Participated in activities

- **43%** were first timers in an age-friendly activity or project
- **91%** joined multiple social or recreational activities

COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILT

953 Volunteers engaged

919 Partners involved

- **35%** municipal
- **27%** local orgs.
- **28%** businesses
- **10%** regional services

PROJECTS LAUNCHED

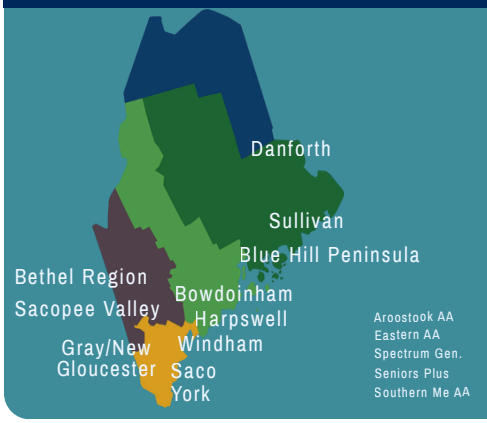
155 Community-Driven initiatives

- 27% Health Promotion
- 22% Social Connection
- 21% Information & Digital Equity
- 15% Housing Safety & Comfort
- 9% Transportation
- 6% Accessible Places & Spaces

KEYS TO SUCCESS

- **Community Driven Solutions.** Rooted in local relationships and resources, Connector projects power changes that outlast the initial site setup costs.
- **Local Knowledge**. Connectors bring deep understanding of their community's culture, strengths, and needs.
- **Comprehensive Training**. Connectors complete tailored training covering ageism, dementia-inclusion, boundaries, program evaluation, and more.
- **Trust Building.** Connectors earn credibility over time, becoming trusted resource experts in their communities.
- **Peer Support**. Connectors learn from each other through a statewide peer network.
- **Partnership**. Sites cultivate partnerships with their AAA and other local and regional organizations to increase capacity and reach of available services.

COMMUNITY CONNECTOR PILOT SITES



12 Pilot sites

14 Community Connectors

10-20 Hours/ week

COMMUNITY-DRIVEN SOLUTIONS

Bowdoinham Volunteer home visiting prog. and resource referral.

St John Valley Bi-lingual health navigator program

Bethel Dementia-inclusive game day and caregiver support

Saco Helping new Mainers navigate the system

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

A Sacopee Valley resident, after starting to attend local social events listed in the community calendar: "It gets me out of myself. It gets me out of my home. I meet new, similar people that have experience to share. It helps me to reinvent who I was."

HELPING THE HELPERS

A family care partner in **Gray and New Gloucester**, on the volunteer rides program: "The NG Rides has been amazing... It just wasn't possible to manage a job and also manage medical rides for my mother-in-law and parents. So it really made it possible for me to keep my job and my sanity."

A family nurse practitioner on the **Blue Hill Peninsula** wrote: "I am so grateful to be able to refer to Bridging Neighbors to help folks get connected with existing resources. Frequently the BN volunteer team will think of a creative solution, or identify a need, that I had missed in my own assessment. I learn from the volunteers each time."

DIRECT FINANCIAL IMPACT

$ 986,083

Connectors helped return to older Mainers through resource connection

- Medicare Savings Program
- SNAP Benefits
- HEAP Fuel Assistance
- Property Tax Prog.
- USDA Home Repair Grants
- Veterans Benefits

Cost-Effective Model

- Expands access to services without adding administrative overhead
- Reduces social isolation and supports healthy, safe aging at a low cost
- Connector stipends recognize service and multiply program reach
- $10,995 median cost to launch a site

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Learn more: lifelongmaine.org/resources/community-connections

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