People of Color Fund Helps Communities Lead

Grants from the People of Color Fund focus on three areas: leadership development, civic engagement, and youth. Here are examples of programs from the past six years that have benefited from funding:

Somali Bantu Community Mutual Assistance Association of Lewiston/Auburn, to support weaving and selling traditional Somali Bantu baskets through the Women’s Basket Weaving Project

Maine Indian Basketmakers Alliance, to support youth mentors and the Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, to increase civic engagement in disenfranchised communities

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Tree Street Youth, to support the Intercultural Community Exchange Intern program

Maine Access Immigrant Network, for a new website to increase access to, and awareness of, programs and events, and to share multilingual health and Affordable Care Act resources

Our Advisors

Advisors to the People of Color Fund have knowledge about and connections to Maine’s communities of color as well as expertise in issues of equity and the fund’s focus areas.

Lisa Sockabasin, chair, Office of Health Equity

Pious Ali, Muskie School of Public Service

Edgar Anderson, UPS, retired

Catherine Besteman, Cobly College

Edwige Charlot, Engine

Gloria Aponte Clarkes, HealthReferral

Barbara Girley, Maine Migrant Health Program

Fatuma Hussein, United Somali Women of Maine

Stefan Jackson, Natural Difference, LLC

Jenna Vendel, Portland Board of Public Education

Past Advisors

William Burney, Department of Housing and Urban Development

Blanca Gurrola, Community Counseling Center

Susan Hammond, Four Directions Development Corporation

Mony Hang, Kennebunkport

Angel Laredo, Maine Department of Education

Will Smith (1968-2015), Berkshire School

What are the tools to achieve racial equity in Maine?

For teens in Lewiston, it’s coaching to become leaders and role models for a growing immigrant community. On Indian Island, young Native Americans are renewing traditional skills with help from their elders, while students from around the world are learning a new language from volunteer tutors in Portland. In Downeast Maine, Latinos are making homes in the region thanks to advocacy and enhanced community services.

The quest for racial equity in Maine advances programs like these that help communities grow from within. They’re supported by the Maine Community Foundation’s People of Color Fund, the first fund in Maine dedicated to addressing needs of communities of color.

Help us celebrate the People of Color Fund’s outstanding record of grantmaking, which began with a $1-million endowment gift from the River Rock Foundation. With the right tools—leadership development, civic engagement training, and community support—Maine’s people of color are gaining opportunities and skills for the future.
Gedakina
Kyle Lolar and his students in the Nature’s Garden initiative enjoy trekking through Maine woods, tapping trees and collecting sap for maple syrup.

“They say it’s the best kind of learning,” Lolar, a youth educator, says of the day spent in the fields, woods, and waterways. Through the program, Native-American youth learn about traditional food systems, indigenous gardening, wild edible plant identification, and sustainable harvesting and preparation.

“They realize now that food comes from somewhere other than the supermarket,” Lolar says. The program also builds leadership skills and self-sufficiency as participants learn to provide healthy food for their families.

Launched in 2013, Nature’s Garden is a program of Gedakina, a multi-generational endeavor to strengthen Native Americans across New England. Last year Gedakina launched PathFinders, a professional/leadership initiative designed to help young adults to lead outdoor education activities, and an economic development initiative that prepares youth and Native Americans to lead the opportunity to work as tutors and become role models.

Tree Street Youth
Signs of a young StreetLeader at Tree Street Youth is a big deal.

“Everyone knows who [the StreetLeaders] are and strives to be like them,” says Julia Steeper, co-founder of the youth center in Lewiston that unites youth through athletics, the arts, and academics. “People respect them because they know how hard they had to work to get to that point.”

The job-training program provides high-school students the opportunity to work as tutors and become role models in their community. The program cultivates leadership, giving students the tools to achieve their goals.

This year, the program will expand to include “The Squad,” a group of middle-school students who aspire to be StreetLeaders. StreetLeaders make powerful connections with younger children in the community.

“People respect them because they know how hard they had to work to get to that point.”

The program, which serves 330 students, helps them achieve language equivalency, become competitive for college admission, and secure financial aid. Many students are the first in their families to attend college and need their coaches to help them navigate the path from middle school to higher education.

“People of Color Fund By the Numbers”

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<th>Year</th>
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<th>Funds distributed</th>
<th>Average each year</th>
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<td>2014</td>
<td>$66,400</td>
<td>$94,500</td>
<td><strong>$73,560</strong></td>
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* For 2009-2014

* Additional funding support from the Maine Health Access Foundation

Mano en Mano
In a quiet but vibrant corner of Downeast Maine, Mano en Mano is busy removing barriers and bridging communities.

In the Milbridge area, home to more than 600 Latinos, Mano en Mano envision a world where different mundos-a world in which many worlds are possible.

“We provide a sense of stability, a sense of being welcome in a very rural part of the state, and a sense of hope and opportunity,” says Yaffe, executive director.

Mano en Mano is constantly evolving to meet the needs of residents. It provides educational and affordable housing opportunities, helps remove barriers to social services, and advocates for social justice for Latino immigrants and migrant workers.

As community partners and workshoas, people from the area build bridges to different communities and celebrate their varied cultures and heritage.

“Everything comes back to providing opportunities to help empower people,” Yaffe says. “We are creating spaces of meaningful communication and understanding to help community members learn together.”

To Learn More
If you’d like more information about the People of Color Fund, please contact Lelia DeAndrade, director of grantmaking services for the Maine Community Foundation, at ldeandrade@ mainecf.org or 877-700-6800.
People of Color Fund Awards by Priority Area

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Annual Awards by Year

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Gedakina
Kyle Lolar and his students in the Nature’s Garden initiative enjoy trekking through Maine woods, tapping trees and collecting sap for maple syrup.

“They say it’s the best kind of learning,” Lolar, a youth educator, says of the work—spent in the field, woods, and waterways. Through the program, Native American youth learn about traditional food systems, indigenous gardening, wild edible plant identification, and sustainable harvesting and preparation.

“They realize now that food comes from somewhere other than the supermarket,” Lolar says. The program also builds leadership skills and self-sufficiency as participants learn to provide healthy food for their families.

Launched in 2013, Nature’s Garden is a program of Gedakina, a multi-generational endeavor to strengthen the cultural knowledge and identity of Native Americans across New England. Last year Gedakina launched PathFinders, a professional/ economic development initiative that prepares youth and young adults to lead outdoor education activities, and for jobs in ecotourism, outdoor adventure, guiding, and wilderness medical professions. “We’re expanding opportunities to learn,” says Lolar. “That’s exciting.”

Mano en Mano
In a quiet but vibrant corner of Downeast Maine, Mano en Mano is busy removing barriers and bridging communities.

In the Milbridge area, home to more than 600 Latinos, Mano en Mano envisions a world where a group of young adults, who grew up in rural Maine, can contribute to their communities.

“We provide a sense of stability, a sense of belonging to a larger group,” says Yaffe, executive director.

Mano en Mano is constantly exploring to meet the needs of residents. It provides educational and affordable housing opportunities, helps remove barriers to social services, and advocates for social justice for Latino immigrants and migrant workers.

At community potlucks and workshops, people from the area build bridges to different communities and celebrate their varied cultural and ethnic heritages.

“Everyone comes back—providing opportunities to help empower people,” Yaffe says. “We’re creating spaces of meaningful communication and understanding to help community members learn together.”

Tree Street Youth
Simply put, being a StreetLeader at Tree Street Youth is a big deal.

“Everyone knows who [the StreetLeaders] are and strives to be like them,” says Julia Sleeper, co-founder of the program. “They’re growing up in the same neighborhood and facing the same challenges.” Sleeper says. “And nothing is cooler to a kindergartner than a high-schooler who wants to hang out with them.”

StreetLeaders make powerful connections with younger children in the community.

“StreetLeaders are really role models for our students,” says Timothy Cronin, coordinator of the program. “They’re a wealth of information. ”

Mano en Mano and StreetLeaders exemplify the impact that can come from investing in underserved communities.

To Learn More
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Multilingual & Multicultural Center
At the first generation of multilingual students from Make & Happen! collect their diplomas and head off to college this year, they’ll leave behind the coaches who helped them navigate the path from middle school to higher education.

“The academic coaches are role models for our students,” explains Timothy Cronin, coordinator of the program of Portland Public Schools’ Multicultural & Multicultural Center. “They’re a wealth of information.”

The program, which serves 330 students, helps them achieve language equivalency, become competitive for college admission, and secure financial aid.

Many students are the first in their families to attend college and need their coaches’ help to overcome language and cultural barriers. Together they tour colleges, fill out applications, and find financial aid.

And it wouldn’t be possible, Cronin notes, without support from the People of Color Fund and the dedication of four AmeriCorps members and more than 40 volunteer coaches.

“For so many students, this program has created a sense of belonging,” Cronin notes. “Students come in and feel they have a home base in the school.”

Mano en Mano
Gedakina
Tree Street Youth
Multilingual & Multicultural Center

Dollars requested: $1.3 million
Average each year: $474,645

People of Color Fund
By the Numbers

$7,500
Applications for grants:
185
Grants awarded:
70
Funds distributed: $440,400

* Pa. 2010-2015

* For 2009-2014

People of Color Fund

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