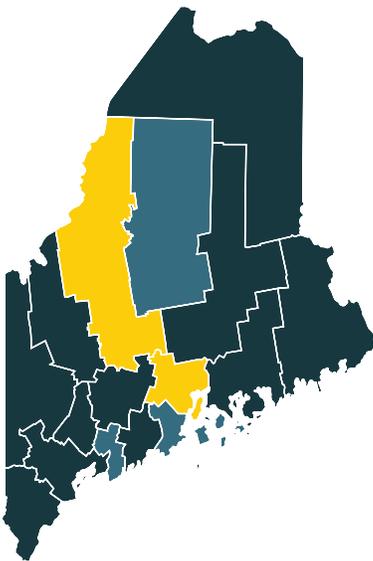


Strengthen Local News. Strengthen Maine Communities.

What Is Press Forward Maine?

Press Forward Maine is a new statewide initiative, part of a larger national movement spearheaded by the MacArthur and Knight foundations to strengthen local news. Led by the Maine Community Foundation, and under the direction of longtime media executive Lisa DeSisto, Press Forward Maine will work with partners across the state to **reimagine, reinvest and rebuild local journalism**.



● 2 of Maine's 16 counties are news deserts

● 3 counties are served by one news outlet

Source: Medill Local News Initiative 2024

Why It Matters

Our own Community Needs Assessment research and a Maine Civic Health report we funded through Colby College tell us people want more ways to feel connected and involved in their communities. As our national Press Forward partners have noted, in towns with robust local journalism:

- Local governments are less polarized
- Civic engagement, public participation and volunteering are more robust
- More people run for office and voting rates are higher

All of that adds up to the fact that strengthening local news strengthens Maine communities.

The Challenges Facing Local News

Local news is vanishing when communities need it most.

- Since 2005, one-third of U.S. newspapers have closed.
- More than 55 million people in the U.S. live in news deserts with no access to local news.
- Revenue for local news outlets has declined while an estimated 60+ percent of online ad revenue now goes to Google and Meta alone.
- In Maine, two counties are news deserts (Somerset and Waldo) while three others are at risk of losing their only news outlet.
- Many of Maine's remaining news outlets have reduced staff, coverage and frequency of publication.
- Gaps in Maine broadband service make access to digital news inequitable.

The Continued Importance and Opportunities for Local News

Despite the challenges, local news is still an essential source of information and there are bright spots and innovations here in Maine, including:

- Community-led news outlets
- Nonprofit ownership models
- New mixed funding sources

Building Stronger Local News: A Strategy Grounded in Maine

This starts with what MaineCF does best - convening and collaborating:

- **Convene journalists and leaders from Maine's media outlets** for listening sessions to understand real-time challenges, such as budget cuts and staffing.
- **Engage an advisory council of trusted civic, media and community leaders** and use their expertise and information gathered in listening sessions to make the biggest impact.
- **Collaborate with existing network of philanthropists to leverage collective resources** and relationships to close access and coverage gaps and support innovation.

A Strong Press Forward Maine Advisory Council

There is significant interest in Press Forward Maine's mission, evidenced by the broad, statewide group of leaders who have agreed to serve on the Advisory Council, including:

Emily Barr, CEO, Graham Media Group (retired)

Carlos Barrionuevo, director, Public Media Company

Jeanne Bourgault, CEO, Internews

Maulian Bryant, executive director, Wabanaki Alliance

Andrew Butcher, president, Maine Connectivity Authority

Judy Meyer, editor emeritus, Sun Journal

Prashant Mittal, professor and data scientist, Roux Institute

Bobby Monks, board member, Pro Publica

Kathryn Olmstead, author, former journalist, Caribou

Andrea Perry, program director, Broad Reach Foundation

(As of Sept. 8, 2025)

MaineCF has set a goal of raising \$1 million to launch the Press Forward Maine chapter and be prepared to move quickly on priority needs. Together, we can strengthen Maine communities by ensuring everyone has equitable access to trusted local news and information.

How You Can Help

- **Become a seed donor** to help launch Press Forward Maine's work statewide.
- **Support your local outlet** - through subscriptions, donations or word of mouth.

To learn more about the ways to support Press Forward Maine, contact **Lisa DeSisto** at ldesisto@mainecf.org



Maine
Community Foundation

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