

From Vision to Action: A Commitment to Maine's Quality of Place
GRANT APPLICATION FORM

ORGANIZATION INFORMATION

Legal Name of Applicant Organization: Maine Farmland Trust, Inc.	
Address: 97 Main Street City: Belfast County: Waldo State: Maine Zip: 04915	
Phone: 207-338-6575	Fax: 207-338-6024
E-mail: info@mainefarmlandtrust.org	Web Site: www.mainefarmland.org
Year Organized/Established: 1999	Number of Paid Staff: 8
Executive Director: John Piotti	IRS Employer ID Number (EIN): 01-0528014

If your organization does not have municipal or 501c3 tax-exempt status, please complete the following information:

Name of Fiscal Sponsor Organization:
Fiscal Sponsor Contact Person:
Address:
City:
State: Zip:
IRS Employer ID Number (EIN) of Fiscal Sponsor:

Please include signed fiscal sponsor agreement with your proposal

Please provide your mission statement: The purpose of the Maine Farmland Trust is to permanently preserve and protect Maine's agricultural land; to assist landowners, land trusts, and municipal and state agencies in identifying and protecting agricultural land; and to make those agricultural lands available for farmers in the future.

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Contact Person: John Piotti	Phone: 207-338-6575	E-mail: info@mainefarmlandtrust.org
In the space provided, write a one-sentence project description: This innovative project aims to revitalize three small village centers by boosting local farming and preserving both local farmland and surrounding forests and wetlands.		
Amount requested: \$ 73,700	Total Project Budget: \$ 95,200	The desired start and ending dates for the grant funds: September 2009 – August 2011
Is this a multi-year request? Yes If yes, please provide an estimate for year 2 and 3 requests? Year 2: \$75,000 (from EFN); \$25,000 (from other sources) Year 3: \$0 (from EFN); \$100,000 (from other sources)		
Top Three Foundation Supporters for the organization: Maine Community Foundation (various grants) Jessie B. Cox Charitable Trust The Horizon Foundation	Other Foundations Supporting this Project:	

Select the County or Counties Served by this Project:

Androscoggin	Aroostook	Cumberland	Franklin	Hancock	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kennebec
Knox	Lincoln	Oxford	Piscataquis	Penobscot	Sagadahoc
Somerset	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Waldo	Washington	York	Statewide	

Select the primary field of interest addressed by your project:

Arts & Cultural Heritage	Health & Welfare	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Land Conservation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Economic Development	Education	Social Services	Youth
Civic Engagement	Theater		

PROJECT BUDGET

The use of this form is required. Please be as specific as possible. If your project is a collaborative effort, we encourage you to engage the partners in the budget process. As a lead organization you may include budget expenses that will be distributed to partners. You may also include in-kind and other revenue from partnering organizations.

Anticipated Expenses and Revenue:

ITEM	1. Amount requested	2. In-kind donations	3. Other funding sources			TOTAL BUDGET (Add columns 1-3)
			Include Earned Income (see below) and indicate if funding is already secured			
			Amount	Source	Secured ?	
<i>Example: speaker fees</i>	<i>\$750</i>		<i>\$250</i>	<i>XYZ Foundation</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>\$1,000</i>
Personnel						
Community Coordinator	\$38,000					\$38,000
Project Director			\$4,500	MFT funds	Yes	\$4,500
Project Partners	\$12,000		\$12,000	MFT funds	Yes	\$24,000
MFT Support Staff	\$6,000					\$6,000
Overhead (office supplies, phone, computer)	\$4,200					\$4,200
Travel (mileage reimbursement)	\$1,500					\$1,500
Consulting Support (for land inventories, ordinance development)	\$12,000		\$5,000	MFT funds	Yes	\$17,000
TOTAL EXPENSES (Program + Personnel)	\$73,700		\$21,500			\$95,200

Anticipated Earned Income (if applicable):

ITEM	AMOUNT
Sales	
Fees for Service	
Other, <i>please specify:</i>	
TOTAL ANTICIPATED INCOME:	

Please use this space to provide any additional information on the budget that you wish to include:

- 1) This is an annual budget for a project that will ideally continue for 2-3 years
- 2) Project is expected (within 3 years) to leverage \$1.2 million - \$2 million in land preservation funds and \$300,000 - \$500,000 in community development funds.

Village, Farm, & Forest: Enhancing Quality of Place in Rural Maine

I. Project Description

Summary: Maine Farmland Trust (MFT) will lead a coalition of partners in an innovative new project that links the built landscape with working farms and wild lands. The goal is to simultaneously (and synergistically) pursue goals of revitalizing small village centers, boosting local farming, and preserving both farmland and surrounding forests and wetlands.

Target region: MFT's service area is statewide, but it often undertakes work through targeted local projects. The focus area for this project includes the "Unity Wetlands" (which is a 45,000-acre tract of undeveloped and unfragmented forests and wetlands—a rarity in central Maine), about 40 adjacent farms, and the three small village centers of Albion, Freedom, and Unity.

Public Engagement: This is a new project, but one that builds upon MFT's past work and an existing foundation of grass-roots interests at multiple levels. Over 30 local farmers have been engaged with project partners, exploring options for revitalizing farms, selling more food locally, and permanently preserving their properties. Many local people are interested in advancing the project's goals. Municipal leaders have been made aware of the great need (and opportunity) and many are now ready to work actively to make something happen. Active public engagement has brought the concept to this point, and active public engagement will continue to be critical as this project moves forward.

II. Opportunity to Advance Quality of Place Recommendations

Regional Landscape Conservation: At its heart, this project is about landscape conservation. It is designed to keep working farms working, preserve important wild lands, and enhance existing village centers. It recognizes that this work cannot be done simply by purchasing land or easements, and that most conservation requires, instead, active partnerships with land owners.

This project will create new opportunities for farmland owners that will result in both more farming and more profit. Some farmland will be "preserved" by the fact that it is being actively and productively farmed, thus removing any eminent threat of sale for development. In other instances, farmers who see a promising future will be more inclined to consider a donated easement that permanently preserves their property. The project will also focus on encouraging better management of local forestland, with similar expected results.

Meanwhile, the project will seek protection of sensitive wild lands (that frequently abut or surround working farms or forests), in three ways: 1) educating land owners about the resource; 2) modifying local land use ordinances; and 3) purchasing land or easements, where appropriate.

Community & Downtown Revitalization: This project recognizes the direct link between vibrant community centers and an active working landscape. One of the targeted communities (Unity) contains a small downtown, and the other two (Albion & Freedom) contain traditional

village centers. The project seeks to enhance local farming in a way that will link to greater vitality within these community centers. (Possible projects include: expanding Unity's existing farmers market and community meals program; placing more local foods into local stores and restaurants; restoring Freedom's grist mill; and creating a grain storage and processing facility to serve the 25 local dairy farms.) Beyond this, the project will assist these communities in adopting new ordinances provisions that will enhance traditional centers, allow infill development, and encourage community revitalization.

Asset-based Development: Though poor by many standards, this region (like much of rural Maine) is rich in other ways. It possesses good land, a pleasing landscape, a good inventory of traditional architecture, and local people who both care deeply about their communities and who understand self reliance. The project builds upon these assets. In addition, the project dovetails with another project in which MFT is working with Maine Rural Partners to raise a local endowment to fund future community projects. That project—which is based upon the “Harness the Wealth” concept initiated by the Nebraska Community Foundation—is Maine's first test of this model.

III. Potential Impact

Underlying Theory/Hypothesis: This project is designed to work on parallel tracks, in ways that will create systemic and synergistic change. It builds upon the following hypotheses: 1) that farmers are more comfortable with the idea of preserving their land if they see a community that embraces farming and that has created new programs or systems to support local food; 2) that communities are more willing to make zoning changes if they see positive examples of how a village center can thrive; and 3) that conservationists become more comfortable with the idea of active farming when they realize that farming is a much better neighbor to wild lands than house lots. The project is also designed to utilize “local food” as an organizing principle. Food is a powerful force that can bring people together, get people to think in new ways, and help advance broader goals of rural sustainability. To make it all work will require hiring a local organizer with broad knowledge and good skills. Couple the right person with the experience and resources of the project partners, and this initiative is poised to create a new model for rural Maine.

Impact on Public Opinion & Public Policy: This project is purposefully designed to change opinions at multiple levels (among farmers, other landowners, local residents and officials, etc.) in order to change local public policy in three principal ways: 1) greater local support (including financial support) for land conservation; 2) greater local support (including financial support) for community development projects; and 3) improved local land-use ordinances (that reinforce quality of place goals).

Expected Outcomes: This project is expected to result in the following: 1) increased local appreciation of quality of place and the active role that local people need to play to enhance it; 2) protection of at least 750 acres of working farmland and another 1,500 acres of threatened or ecologically-important wild lands; 3) several new community-based initiatives linking farm production to the local economy; 4) at least one village improvement project in each of the three village centers (likely linked to #3); 5) revised local land use ordinances designed to better

protect farmland, wild lands, and traditional village character; 6) over \$2 million in new community investment; and 7) documented project results that can be shared with others.

Measurement: Before beginning work, project partners will develop a set of evaluation measures that can be tracked and used to make mid-course changes and evaluate overall results.

IV. Innovative Tools/Practices

Uniqueness & Learning Expectations: This is the only project of this sort in Maine, and perhaps the nation. It uses food and farming as a vehicle to bring together conservation and community development goals. It is expected to result in new techniques to enhance quality of place. The project could prove a replicable model to increase rural sustainability.

Work Elsewhere: There is a lot of good work being undertaken focused on incorporating farming into community development. MFT is very familiar with this work. (Indeed, MFT's John Piotti has been a pioneer in this field during his years running farms programming for Coastal Enterprises, Incorporated; and in 2005, John was awarded an Eisenhower Fellowship to explore European models). This project builds upon this work, but takes it to the next level.

Innovation: This project is particularly innovative in the following ways: 1) it simultaneously addresses three underlying hypotheses (see above), in order to achieve greater impact; and 2) it pulls together a unique set of partners (national, state, and local, with interests ranging from farming to conservation to community development to community planning).

V. Collaboration Readiness

Greater Impact: The whole idea behind this project is to realize goals collaboratively that could not be achieved separately. This new collaboration is critical, in order to bring together expertise in farming, wild lands conservation, community development, and land use planning.

Connections: The future of farming depends to a great extent on where and how new development occurs, as well as how existing development is connected—functionally and economically—with working farmland. At the same time, in much of rural Maine (including the focus area for this project), the health of wild lands is directly dependent on the health of adjacent farmland. If, for instance, a farm is not farmed in a way that minimizes erosion and avoids chemicals, the health of nearby wetlands will suffer. And if that farmland is developed, it will no longer serve as a critical buffer to the adjacent wild lands.

Partners: MFT will work with American Farmland Trust (AFT), Friends of Unity Wetlands (FUW), Unity Barn Raisers (UBR), and the towns of Albion, Freedom, and Unity. MFT has past success working with each of these partners, though not ALL of them together in one project.

Key Personnel: MFT will hire a new community coordinator. MFT's ED, John Piotti, will be project director. John has worked for 20 years on community development issues, as the CEO of

two award-winning non-profits and as a public official. John will be assisted by Cris Coffin, AFT's New England Manager, and by Tess Woods, ED at UBR and Jennifer Irving, ED at FUW.

Primary Roles: MFT and UBR will take the lead on local development projects. FUW—with its existing connections to local land owners—will identify new land conservation projects. AFT will help local residents and municipal officials pursue new land use strategies.

Past Collaborations: MFT has proven experience working with all project partners, often in innovative ways:

- MFT and FUW collaborated on a “first-of-its-kind” Land for Maine Future (LMF) application that targeted a region (rather than a specific property) and sought to preserve farmland as a way to preserve a buffer protecting critical wetlands and wildlife habitat. With LMF funds as a starting point, MFT and FUW have now leveraged adequate resources to preserve over 2,000 acres of strategically-located working farmland.
- MFT and UBR have worked together on several cutting-edge projects to both create new farming ventures and support existing ones. (Joint efforts designed to promote organic grain production on dairy farms and to increase local food security have been nationally recognized). This project builds upon UBR's past success increasing the vibrancy of Unity's small town economy, through projects where local food is often the centerpiece.
- MFT and AFT are currently collaborating on a project that will provide a publication and web presence to serve local communities seeking to support farming, prevent sprawl, and enhance local food security. The next step (to be piloted by this project) is to provide a targeted community with substantive technical assistance. *NOTE: Though originally serving as a land trust, AFT has in the last decade transformed into an organization that supports farmland preservation through community planning and community organizing.*
- MFT has worked before with municipal leaders in Albion, Freedom, and Unity. In Unity, MFT staff played a pivotal role in that community's land use ordinance, which took bold steps to encourage village development and protect farming. But more is needed in Unity, while Albion and Freedom both possess small village centers that could benefit significantly from both ordinance changes and new food-related innovations.

Operating Structure: Partner relationships will be formalized through MOUs. The local organizer will report to a new Coordinating Committee comprised of all project partners.

VI. Organizational Readiness

Current Position: MFT now boasts over 2,000 members (up from 300 just three years ago) and has helped preserve over two-thirds of all the farmland preserved in Maine. It was recognized in April with the Dirigo Award as the most outstanding non-profit organization in the state. This is the right project at the right time for MFT, which is poised for further growth and greater impact. Beyond this, MFT has (as explained below) undertaken other work with the project's partners, built a good local reputation, and chosen a project that fits our current strategic direction.

How Perceived: MFT has done past work in the region, both on its own and with UBR and FUW. MFT has worked directly with local land owners and has an excellent local reputation.

Project Fit: This project is in complete alignment with MFT’s mission and strategic direction. Founded in 1999, MFT’s mission is to preserve farmland and keep farms economically viable. Unlike some other organizations that preserve farmland, MFT focuses simultaneously on classic preservation techniques (such as permanent easements) and innovative ways to keep existing farms in business or recruit new farmers. (MFT’s FarmLink program has now matched over 45 new farmers with older farmers needing to retire or sell—making it the most successful such program in the nation.) Two years ago, MFT’s board decided to take the organization in the direction of using farming and farmland to support broader community goals. The result has been a major grant from the Jessie B. Cox Foundation and the recent award of a USDA Community Food Project grant. This project fits perfectly with where MFT is headed.

Capacity: MFT is a dynamic and well-managed organization that can easily handle this new project. A highly capable and growing staff (now numbering eight) has increasingly taken on increasingly challenging projects. Our two most recent initiatives include: 1) launching a major capital campaign; and 2) undertaking a comprehensive, multi-partner, three-year \$600,000 “farm viability” project.

Impact of No EFN Funding: This project can only proceed with EFN funding. Though MFT is convinced that receipt of EFN funds will enable it to attract other funds to continue the project, MFT needs EFN funds as the initial catalyst.

VII. Project Timeline

The plan is to begin in fall 2009. A local organizer will be hired within two months of the project award. The project is envisioned to continue for three years. EFN funds are needed for Year 1, and desired for Year 2. MFT expects to be able to raise all funds necessary for Year 3.