State of Maine

Volunteer Maine,

The Commission for Community Service



**$1500 Mini-grants for Youth-led
Semester of Service Projects**

2024 Martin Luther King Jr Day to National Youth Service Day
(Jan. 15, 2024 – April 21, 2024)

Project Guidelines and Application Instructions

**Apply Now!**

Submission Deadline **Extended**: ~~November 9, 2023~~ **November 21, 2023**

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Mini-grants for Youth-led Semester of Service Projects

Project Guidelines and Mini-grant Application Instructions

## PART I INTRODUCTION

### Purpose and Background

Volunteer Maine, the state service commission, is inviting applications for ***mini-grants of up to $1,500*** to support youth-led planning, development, and implementation of community service projects. This document provides instructions for submitting proposals, the procedure, and criteria for selecting award recipients, and the requirements award recipients must fulfill.

The Semester of Service begins on Martin Luther King Day of Service (1/15/2024) and ends on National Youth Service Day (4/21/2024). Service projects may take place any time between those dates. Award recipients will participate in a Celebration of Service in April. At the event, the youth will have a booth to describe their results and learning to visitors. Final written project reports for the private funders are due on or before May 3, 2024.

In 1994, Congress passed the King Holiday and Service Act, designating the Martin Luther King Jr. Federal Holiday as a National Day of Service. It is the only federal holiday with this designation. As a “Day on, not a day off”, the goal is to engage underrepresented individuals in service that unites communities, addresses barriers to inclusion, and moves us closer to Dr. King’s vision of a “Beloved Community.”

Volunteer Maine is part of a national network dedicated to fostering community service that is conceived and implemented by community members. The Commission’s Semester of Service grants aim to give youth the opportunity to contribute to solutions and learn skills that will let them be active participants in civic life. For those reasons, proposed projects must truly be youth-led.

“Youth-led” means individuals 17 or younger take the lead in all aspects of the initiative (research, decision-making, design, implementation). Advisors over 18 years old are resources and process facilitators. Youth-leadership is critical because it develops young people’s knowledge, skills and confidence to be catalysts for positive change within their communities.

Eligible projects will be organized by a group of youth (class, club, team, youth faith group, etc.) to benefit a specific community, have a specific goal or result, and engage members of the community in carrying out the project. For example, if the youth decide to make a community downtown more walkable, they could engage people with mobility or vision issues in the assessment and report findings with recommendations to the town council.

In addition, the youth group is asked to learn what Dr. King meant by the “Beloved Community” and reflect on what their actions can contribute to making it a reality in their locale. The King Center in Atlanta has classroom resources on their website (e.g., The Power of Hello) for students as young as 3rd grade (<https://thekingcenter.org/what-we-do/classroom-resources/>).

“The Beloved Community” is a term first coined in the early 20th Century by the philosopher-theologian Josiah Royce, b1855 - d1916. For Dr. King, the Beloved Community was not an altruistic goal but rather a realistic, achievable goal. It could be attained by people working together to end poverty, hunger, homelessness, racism, prejudice, violence, bullying, and other conditions that divide or weaken a community. Dr. King’s Beloved Community was not lacking interpersonal, group or international conflict. He recognized that conflict was an inevitable part of human experience. But he believed that conflicts could be resolved peacefully and adversaries could be reconciled through a mutual, single-minded commitment to nonviolence that led them to communicate and cooperate in a spirit of kindness and compassion.

## PART II OVERVIEW OF MINI-GRANT PROGRAM AND REQUIREMENTS

### Grant Program Coordinator

The Commission staff person overseeing this grant program is Kelsey Preecs (Kelsey.preecs@maine.gov, 207-624-7792).

### Focus Areas for Service Projects

Based on feedback about community needs, the Commission is most interested in youth-led service projects that address local issues in one of the following areas:

* Public health (physical and mental)
* Climate action
* Housing – affordable and safe housing; home energy conservation, weatherization, or repair including programs that perform the modifications, teach homeowners DIY skills, or help residents connect with programs that offer financial assistance to accomplish the projects
* Community inclusion (understanding who feels left out and why, removing barriers to their participation in community life).
* Community resilience, adaptation, and sustainability including emergency preparedness.

### Eligibility to Apply

Eligible applicants are organizations with youth programs or youth constituents, 17 years old or younger, that are Maine public or private nonprofits, state/county/local units of government, higher ed institutions, faith-based organizations, Indigenous communities, and local schools.

Regardless of the type of youth group, the legal applicant must have an employer identification number (EIN) or taxpayer identification number (TIN) and, if selected, accept responsibility for signing the grant agreement, accounting for grant funds, and submitting a report on the outcomes of the project. Awards will not be made to individuals.

### Number of Awards

The Commission anticipates making up to 8 awards through this grant process.

### Types of Assistance

* **Cash Awards.** MLK Day of Service Awards of up to $1,500 are available. These cash awards are intended to assist with planning and implementation expenses such as space, materials, transportation to service sites, advertising to the community, skill training for youth or volunteers, etc. All expenses must be documented by receipts.
* **Promotion of Local Projects.** Volunteer Maine will use information provided by grant recipients to promote Maine’s Semester of Service to state and national media. Volunteer Maine will coordinate local media promotion with the award recipient and assist if requested.
* **Training** for youth group members and adult advisors on project development and planning.

### Key Dates

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ~~November 9, 2023~~November 21, 2023 | Application submission deadline |
| November 27, 2023 | Award decisions announced |
| November 27-December 8, 2023 | Process the award paperwork. (Recipients must be available during this period to sign documents and return them promptly!)  |
| January 15, 2024 | Semester of Service project starts with discovery and planning steps. See “Basic Steps in a Youth-led Project” (below). |
| Determined by award recipient | On completion of #4 under “Basic Steps in a Youth-led Project” grant recipient submits to the Commission a brief report of progress and invoice for 85% of funds. |
| On or before April 21, 2024 | Youth groups complete implementation of service projects. |
| April 2024 | Participate in Celebration of Service, an in-person event at which youth share results and learning with guests. The exact date is TBD (awaiting site confirmation). |
| May 4, 2024 | Deadline for submitting final written project report for funders and final invoice. |

### Basic Steps in a Youth-led Project

1. The youth group begins the Semester of Service on Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service with an introduction to Dr. King’s concept of “The Beloved Community” and age-appropriate discussion of what social justice issues are impacting their own community’s ability to be a resilient, thriving, safe, and inclusive place.
2. Group members identify an issue they want to impact and then research all sides of the issue in the community so they understand what contributes to its existence, what could change it, and what can be done in the short term to lessen the impact. As part of this step, they interview community members who are experts or deal with the issue in their work.
3. Youth review what they’ve learned about the issue and select an action strategy to begin changing the impact of the issue. This launches the project planning for an event that engages all members of the youth group and others in the community. At this point, students decide what blend of community education and direct volunteer service their project will have.
4. Youth group members determine what community partners might support their effort. Are there other organizations working on the same issue? Are there community members – individuals, businesses, nonprofits, municipal offices – who share their concern? Would they join forces or lend expertise to the student goals? They invite these potential partners and supporters to help carry out the project.
5. Youth prepare to execute the project by
* identifying tasks to be accomplished not only on the day(s) of the event(s) but in the preparation phase;
* listing resources needed to carry out the tasks (location, people, materials, supplies, transportation, safety training or equipment, technology to document event, etc.);
* assigning preparation tasks to peers and community partners who are helping;
* describing opportunities for community volunteers to help on the day and communicating those through local media.
1. Youth and their partners along with community volunteers implement their service plan, document the event and the results through videos, photos, news coverage, etc.
2. Youth reflect on the entire project experience in order to connect personal learning and the activity. A reflection exercise is usually scheduled for the end of the project event. It can be small group discussion over snacks but it can also take the form of interviews by teams of “reporters” who record individuals’ thoughts electronically. (Great material for a video final report!) A creative person might devise a way for participants to reflect their insights artistically. Whatever form you give to your volunteers’ reflection activity, be sure to pose some thoughtful questions and give them time to mull over the answers.

Here are some questions that you can use to help people focus and reflect. Feel free to pick and choose.
- What did you expect the experience would be like? What was different from your expectations?
- What did you know about this issue before working on this project? What did you learn that made the biggest impression on you?
- Does the issue impact your community in a way that calls for more action? Why or why not?
- How does this issue impact Maine? Do volunteers have a role in addressing it?
- During the service, what did you see, hear, or notice that will remain with you as a memory of the time?
3. Youth report the results to their partners and the volunteers, show appreciation to supporters, and help compile the final project report due to the Commission by 5/4/2024.

### Reporting Requirements

FIRST REPORT. Upon completion of step 3 under “Basic Steps in a Youth-led Project” a report of progress must be submitted with the first invoice for funds. The report needs to describe

* How many youth are involved in the Semester of Service;
* What priority area their project aligns with;
* What community issue they selected to address and what action(s) they decided to take; and
* The planned date for the service project.

FINAL REPORT. This report is due with the final invoice for funds after the service project is completed and no later than May 4, 2024. Youth members may create a video or narrated slide show rather than a written/text report. Regardless of the format, the final report must cover the following items:

* A summary of the issue they selected and why it is important in the community.
* What was done including where, when, and how much was accomplished
* How many members of the group participated and how many community volunteers joined in on the project
* What impact the project had on the issue.

### General Information

* Questions about the grant requirements, application, or guidelines should be addressed to the Grant Program Coordinator named on page 4.
* The Commission may grant full or partial awards at its discretion.
* All amendments (i.e., corrections or revisions) released to this document will be posted to the VolunteerMaine.gov Grant Page. It is the responsibility of all interested parties to monitor this page and obtain any amendments. Only those amendments posted on this website are considered binding.
* The proposal must be signed by a person authorized to legally bind the applicant organization.
* This “Guidelines and Application Instructions” document and the selected proposals, including the budget, will be the basis for the final award and the recipient’s commitment to implement the Semester of Service as outlined in the proposal.
* Following announcement of award decisions, all submitted applications will be public records, available for public inspection pursuant to the State of Maine Freedom of Access Act (FOAA) ([1 M.R.S. § 401](http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/1/title1sec401.html) et seq.).
* Volunteer Maine, at its sole discretion, reserves the right to recognize and waive minor informalities and irregularities found in proposals received in response to the RFA.
* All applicable laws, whether or not herein contained, are included by this reference. It is the applicant’s responsibility to determine the applicability and requirements of any such laws and to abide by them.
* Service projects that are supported by these awards must be completed by April 21, 2024.
* Grant awards are paid in two installments. The first 85% will be paid upon completion of the third project step (review of learning and selection of action strategy) and submission of both a brief description of youth progress-to-date and invoice for planning work. The report of progress may be written by students as part of the experience. The remaining 15% will be paid upon submission of an invoice and the final project report on or before May 4, 2024.

### Selection Process and Award

All funding applications will be assessed by a panel of reviewers, many with expertise in volunteer service projects. They will read and rate each proposal using the criteria described below.

Officials responsible for making award selection decisions will ensure the selection process gives equal opportunity and appropriate consideration to all who are capable of fulfilling requirements.

The decision of the award selection panel regarding awards is a final decision of Volunteer Maine, the state service commission.

Applications will be assessed using the following selection criteria:

* (65%) Plan for supporting youth participation and timeline
* (10%) Applicant Organization’s Capability
* (25%) Budget Adequacy and Cost (Project budget is realistic and represents allowable costs necessary for the project success.)

## PART III APPLICATION CONTENT AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

### Part A. Submitting the Proposal

* 1. **Proposals Due:** Proposals must be received no later than 11:59 p.m. local time, on November 9, 2023.
	2. **Submission Instructions:** E-mail the proposal as an attachment to: Service.Commission@maine.gov
		1. The subject header for the email MUST read “[legal applicant’s name] Semester of Service Application” and have a return receipt request.
		2. Only proposal submissions received by e-mail will be considered. The Commission assumes no liability for assuring accurate/complete e-mail transmission and receipt.
		3. E-mails containing links to file sharing sites or online file repositories will not be accepted as submissions. Only e-mail proposal submissions that have the actual requested files attached will be accepted.
		4. Encrypted e-mails received which require opening attachments and logging into a proprietary system will not be accepted as submissions. Please check with your organization’s Information Technology team to ensure that your security settings will not encrypt your proposal submission.
		5. File size limits are 2MB per e-mail. All e-mails and files must be received by the due date and time listed above.
		6. Proposal submissions should be a single file and named as shown in the bold title below, and include the listed content in the order shown:
* **[Legal Applicant’s Name] – Proposal**

*PDF format preferred; Word (docx, doc) accepted*

a) Proposal Cover Page

b) Narrative

c) Budget

d) Proof of Eligibility (Applicant organization’s W9)

### Part B. Proposal Format and Contents

The applicant’s proposal should follow the outline below, including the section headings. Failure to provide requested information may result in the proposal being disqualified as non-responsive or receiving a reduced score.

Do not add materials that are not requested. They will not be considered part of the proposal and will not be evaluated. All information must be presented in the same order and format as described below.

**Content** (File #1)

**a) Cover Page.** Complete **Appendix A** (Proposal Cover Page). It is critical that the cover page show the specific information requested, including the legal applicant’s address and other details listed. The Proposal Cover Page must be dated and signed by a person authorized to enter into contracts on behalf of the legal applicant. Electronically signed cover sheets (e.g., Adobe Sign or Dropbox) must include the audit trail showing authentication of signatures.

**b) Narratives.**PARTICIPANTS. Briefly describe the youth/students who will participate in the Semester of Service project. Include how many, age range, the degree to which they reflect the community, and the common tie (in the same class, belong to same youth group, etc.). Describe what efforts have been made to ensure youth who are typically left out or not connected will participate.

ADVISORS. Identify and describe the specific adults (names, relationship to students, experience with advising on projects) who will guide the students through the Semester of Service including planning and implementation of the service project.

AWARENESS AND REFLECTION. Describe how and when students/youth will be introduced to Dr. King’s “Building the Beloved Community”. Include the plan for giving students time to reflect on how this concept connects to their lives and community.

WORK PLAN. Outline completion dates for the basic steps (see page 5) and describe the indicators of completion.

RESOURCE GUIDE. Name the planning guide adults will provide students to structure their progress through the steps. One option is “Youth Changing the World” by Youth Service America. The manual is free but users are asked to provide their name and email to YSA. The internet address is <http://ysa.org/resources/#1531255350122-580ea233-1dc7>. The Commission knows that Scouts, Extension, and other groups have guides that are equally useful. This suggestion should not be interpreted as a preference.

END OF PROJECT REFLECTION. Describe when and how as well as who will be responsible for leading a structured reflection for youth/students and community participants after completion of the project.

APPLICANT CAPABILITY. Describe the applicant organization’s relationship to the youth group. Also describe its experience in managing small grant projects or donor supported projects. In particular, describe who is responsible for the financial processes and how the applicant ensures donations are recorded, safeguarded, and used only for the intended expenditures.

**c) Proof of Eligibility**Submit a copy of the legal applicant’s W9. Note: If the applicant has not done business with the State of Maine and does not have a vendor code in the state accounting system, this will need to be done before any award is final.

**Part C. Budget** (File #2)

Use **APPENDIX B** (Budget form) to prepare the Semester of Service budget.

EXPENSES NOT PERMITTED. Award funds may not be used to fund religious instruction/worship/proselytization; speakers’ honoraria; celebrations or banquets; or activity not connected with actual student planning, or community volunteers, or conducting the service project. Although celebrations, parades, and recognition ceremonies may be a part of the activities that you plan, those activities will have to be underwritten by other community donations.

ALLOWABLE EXPENSES. Examples of expenses that can be paid with award funds include facility use for meetings, youth transportation to project site, posters or mailers to recruit volunteers, project materials, or training materials. This list does not have every possible allowed expense. If the proposal author has questions, please contact the grant coordinator.

COMPLETE BUDGET ENTRIES. Budgets must show formula calculations for items. Two examples are here:

8 hours hall rental @ $30/hour = $240

 100 copies X $0.10 = $10.00

### APPENDIX A: PROPOSAL COVER PAGE

**State of Maine**

**Volunteer Maine**

Mini-grants for Youth-led Semester of Service Projects

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Organization Name:** |  |
| **Organization’s EIN/TIN:** |  |
| **If organization has done business with the state of Maine, its Vendor Code:** |  |
| **Chief Executive - Name/Title:** |  |
| **Tel:** |  | **E-mail:** |  |
| **Organization Street Address:** |  |
| **Organization Postal Address:** |  |
| **City/State/Zip:** |  |
| **Proposal Point of Contact - Name/Title:** |  |
| **Tel:** |  | **E-mail:** |  |
| **Street Address:** |  |
| **City/State/Zip:** |  |
| **Youth Group Name:** |  |
| **Total Funding Requested:** |  |

* No personnel currently employed by the Commission or any other State agency participated, either directly or indirectly, in any activities relating to the preparation of this proposal.
* No attempt has been made, or will be made, by the applicant to induce any other person or organization to submit or not to submit a proposal.
* The above-named organization is the legal entity entering into the resulting grant agreement with the Commission if they are selected for an award.
* The undersigned is authorized to enter contractual obligations on behalf of the above-named organization.

*To the best of my knowledge, all information provided in the enclosed proposal, both programmatic and financial, is complete and accurate at the time of submission.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name (Print):** | **Title:** |
| **Authorized Signature:** | **Date:** |

### APPENDIX B: BUDGET FORM

**State of Maine**

**Volunteer Maine**

Mini-grants for Youth-led Semester of Service Projects

**EXAMPLE OF BUDGET ENTRY**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| EXPENSE ITEM | CALCULATION OF COST | ITEM TOTAL |
| Youth meeting space | 8 hours hall rental @ $30/hour | 240.00 |

**YOUR BUDGET**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| EXPENSE ITEM | CALCULATION OF COST | ITEM TOTAL |
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|  | TOTAL BUDGET (FUNDS REQUESTED) |  |