



## **Maine Community Foundation Factsheet: Lewiston-Auburn Area Response Funds**

The following factsheet outlines the Maine Community Foundation's (MaineCF) process for designing, administering and distributing its two Lewiston-Auburn Area Response Funds. Please contact [info@mainecf.org](mailto:info@mainecf.org) with any further questions.

### **Reasoning for Two Funds**

#### **Q. Why were two Lewiston-Auburn Area Response Funds established? Why weren't all funds directed to victims and their families?**

**A.** In the wake of the Oct. 25, 2023, mass shooting in Lewiston, MaineCF hired Jeff Dion, executive director of the Mass Violence Survivors Fund, to help design and administer the two Lewiston-Auburn Area Response Funds. Dion is one of the nation's foremost mass casualty victims' advocates. He has worked with victims and families after mass shootings in more than 31 communities across the country, helping to administer relief funds that have disbursed more than \$150 million to survivors. According to Dion, supporting the broader community's recovery, alongside direct assistance to victims and their families, is "**best practice**." This approach—guided by compassion and a commitment to supporting Lewiston in its darkest hour—recognizes that healing extends beyond victims and their immediate families to the entire Lewiston-Auburn community.

MaineCF established two Lewiston-Auburn Area Response Funds — the Victims & Families Fund (Victims Fund) and the Broad Recovery Efforts & Organizations Fund (Broad Recovery Fund) -- that were announced on the first day of this effort, Oct. 27, 2023. The criteria for applying have been [publicly available](#) on the MaineCF website for more than two years.

The Victims Fund distributed \$4.7 million to 162 victims, families, and survivors of the shooting. Details on how Victims Fund resources were distributed can be found on our [website](#).

The Broad Recovery Fund distributed \$1.9 million to support 29 local community organizations based in Lewiston, which stepped up under extraordinary circumstances to provide services, including: emergency mental health services and counseling to children following the shooting, food and supplies for victims, child care and after-school programs while local schools were on closed during the community lockdown, and much more.

Examples of relevant Broad Recovery Fund services or support, as outlined in our criteria (available on our [website](#)), included:

- Mental health services such as therapy, counseling, and other trauma response treatments
- Emergency food and supplies
- Transportation, ASL interpretation, cultural brokering, and other forms of assistance in navigating support services
- Trauma-informed health and social-emotional wellness education and people focused support programming
- Victims-focused legal and social services.

This approach was based on a recognized strategy for community healing developed through years of experience. Other mass violence relief efforts that have included broader community needs funds include:

- Walmart shooting in El Paso, Texas, Aug. 4, 2019; funds sponsored by Paso del Norte Community Foundation and El Paso Community Foundation.
- Tops Supermarket shooting in Buffalo, New York, May 14, 2022; sponsored by Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo.
- Robb Elementary Shooting in Uvalde, Texas, May 24, 2022; funds sponsored by the San Antonio Foundation and the Community Foundation of the Texas Hill Country.
- Covenant School shooting in Nashville, Tennessee, March 27, 2023; funds sponsored by the Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee.

## Broad Recovery Fund Criteria

**Q. Can you provide additional information on how charitable organizations were selected for the Broad Recovery Fund? How many organizations were denied and why?**

A. The Victims Fund and the Broad Recovery Fund were announced on the first day of this effort. The criteria for applying have been publicly available on the MaineCF [website](#) for more than two years. Charitable organizations that met the criteria for the Broad Recovery Fund were welcome to apply for grants starting Feb. 5, 2024. Twenty-nine organizations out of thirty-six applicants received funding, which was distributed evenly among each organization. Six were not eligible because they were not located in the Lewiston/Auburn communities and one was denied because the grant application was not complete.

## Steering Committee

**Q. Some members of the Broad Recovery Fund Steering Committee were employed by charitable organizations that received grants. Isn't this a conflict of interest? Did they steer funds to their own organizations?**

**A.** No. As core members of the Lewiston-Auburn community, the Broad Recovery Fund’s Steering Committee convened to provide essential insight and context on the region, as well as feedback on the overall process and approach. According to Jeff Dion, executive director of the Mass Violence Survivors Fund, this process is considered **best practice** as “local community groups are best equipped to identify, understand, and respond to these needs as they arise in the aftermath of such an incident.” The committee voted on only two things: 1) the criteria for receiving a grant from the fund; and 2) whether grants would be equal amounts to all qualifying organizations or structured in tiers, with varying amounts. As outlined in the Broad Recovery & Organization Fund’s criteria (available on our [website](#)), “all aspects of this Final Protocol, including, without limitation, the eligibility categories, distribution criteria, application process, and timetable, may be revised and [were] subject to the full and complete discretion of MaineCF as the Fund Administrator.”

This question was also thoroughly reviewed by experienced, nonpartisan consumer protection and charities law enforcement officials in the State of Maine at the Maine Attorney General’s Office. After “thoroughly reviewing” materials and information “about the fact of and process underlying distributions” to charitable organizations, the Maine Attorney General’s Office “identified no legal concerns” and thanked MaineCF for its “willingness to step up to manage the fundraising efforts.” A letter summarizing the findings of this review can be found on our [website](#).

### **Fund Allocation/ Distribution**

**Q. How were donations to the Lewiston-Auburn Area Response allocated between the two funds? Did MaineCF “siphon” dollars away from victims and give them to charitable organizations?**

**A.** Donors selected what fund or funds their contributions supported when they made their donations: the Victims Fund or the Broad Recovery Fund. Donors received a “thank you” letter or message from MaineCF within days of their donation that expressed appreciation for their support and confirmed to which fund or funds their donation went, consistent with their intent. One hundred percent of funds directed to the Victims Fund went to victims and their families. MaineCF waived all processing fees for this work. No donation to the Victims Fund was ever moved to the Broad Recovery Fund or vice versa. This separation of funds was a core principle of our process.

### **Checks Via Mail**

**Q. If donations were made by mail-in check and donors did not designate which of the two funds they preferred their money to go to, how was the donation allocated?**

**A.** MaineCF’s foremost priority is – and always has been – to respect the intentions and wishes of our donors, which, in this case, included people from across the world who

wanted to help by making a financial contribution. The majority of donors provided clear instructions to direct money to a specific fund or to split money between both funds. In situations where no instruction was provided, MaineCF could not and did not make assumptions about their intent.

Per foundation policy (which was outlined on our [website](#) during the donation period), charitable donations that were made to our two Lewiston-Auburn Area Response Funds without designating a specific fund were applied equally to both the Victims Fund and the Broad Recovery Fund. For every donor whose contact information we had, we promptly sent a thank you confirmation, clearly specifying the amount donated and exactly how it was allocated – either to the Lewiston-Auburn Area Response Fund: Victims & Families, the Lewiston-Auburn Area Response Fund: Broad Recovery Efforts & Organizations, or both.

No donor, upon receiving confirmation, requested their funding allocation be changed before or after the fund closed for donations on Feb. 20, 2024.

## How Funds Were Used

### **Q. What did organizations that received Broad Recovery Fund grants do with the money?**

**A.** MaineCF did not require organizations to submit full reports due to the urgent need to utilize these grants in the community. Most organizations, however, did so voluntarily. We proudly stand by our work to support community organizations, which stepped up under extraordinary circumstances to provide emergency mental health services and counseling to children following the shooting, food and supplies for victims, child care and after school programs while our school systems were closed during community lockdown, and much more. That information, alongside several news stories detailing how grant recipients used funds, can be found in our [one-year fact sheet](#).

## Giving Back Funds

### **Q. How does MaineCF respond to recent reports indicating that Broad Recovery Fund grantees are opting to “give back” the funds they received, redirecting resources back to victims?**

**A.** Respectfully, this question is misleading. Grants from the Broad Recovery Fund were spent by charitable organizations in the immediate aftermath of the Lewiston shooting to support services outlined in their grant applications. If an organization two years later opts to make a new donation to support the long-term, ongoing needs of victims and families, that is their own decision to make.