MaineStream Finance

Bangor, Maine

MaineStream Finance (MSF) is a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) dedicated to promoting economic development in Maine by providing credit, capital, and financial services to low- and moderate-income residents, who are often underserved by traditional banks. MSF was established in 2000 as a subsidiary of Penquis CAP, a community action program, to serve Penobscot, Piscataquis, Knox, and Waldo Counties.

In addition to being a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)-approved Housing Counseling Agency, MSF is also an approved Microloan Business Lender for the Small Business Administration (SBA) and participates in programs administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development and the Finance Authority of Maine (FAME). Business counseling, technical assistance, and workshops are offered by MSF with support of the SBA and USDA.

MSF provides a variety of financial products, including microloans of $50,000 or less, to help businesses start up and expand, as well as first mortgage loans up to $150,000 and first and second mortgages up to $25,000 for home purchase, refinance, and repair. MSF also provides classroom training and one-on-one counseling to help individuals prepare business plans, become first-time homebuyers, keep their homes when at risk of foreclosure, create reasonable household budgets, and understand and repair credit histories.

To date, MSF has provided over $5 million in loans to Maine homeowners, individuals, and entrepreneurs. More than 1,000 individuals and microbusiness owners receive assistance annually.

Since 2001, MSF has received $1.7 million in grants from the CDFI Fund and has made 338 loans, totaling $7.5 million. Support from the CDFI Fund has significantly increased MSF’s lending capital, helping it invest in microbusiness development and homeownership, improve its infrastructure, operate more efficiently and sustainably, and allow it to better meet the needs of its target market.

Bull Moose Taxi

In 2013, MSF provided 20 microloans, amounting to $269,000, to several rural microbusiness owners, including a U.S. Navy Veteran, Ms. Jean Bulley, owner of Bull Moose Taxi.

In 2011, Ms. Bulley lost her home in a fire. Shortly thereafter, her husband lost his job when the local taxi business closed. With limited incomes and few options, the Bulleys could only afford to rent a substandard apartment in poor condition. Despite a physical disability, Ms. Bulley worked part-time at the local grocery store in Millinocket, Maine, where she learned of the need for a taxi service.

After graduating from MSF’s microenterprise training course, Ms. Bulley met one-on-one with an MSF business counselor, who helped her prepare a business plan for Bull Moose Taxi. MSF also provided Ms. Bulley with a small business loan to help her get her business off the ground. With the help of MSF, Bull Moose Taxi has now become a successful business, employing 1 full-time and 2 part-time employees. This is welcome news in this small community of 4,500 residents, with a poverty rate of 11.9 percent and a 13.2 percent unemployment rate.

One year after opening her Bull Moose Taxi company, Ms. Bulley reached out to MSF to help her achieve another dream: to become a homeowner again. MSF provided her with a mortgage loan to help her purchase an affordable, safe, and fully furnished house.