



## Town of Island Falls

# *Growing Into Modern Times*

### **Katahdin Collaborative – Working Communities Challenge**

The Town of Island Falls is part of the Katahdin Region, which consists of 9 towns: Mount Chase, Island Falls, Crystal, Patten, Sherman, Stacyville, Medway, East Millinocket and Millinocket, and has now for several years actively participated in different projects.

One of those regional projects is “The Working Communities Challenge”. Its objective is to advance local collaborative efforts that build strong, healthy economies and communities in Maine’s rural towns, regions, and smaller cities. It launched in 2020, the initiative supports local teams working together to improve economic outcomes for all people in Maine.

The objective of “The Working Communities Challenge” is to support cross sector leadership teams with shared ambitious goals. The leadership teams must be from communities with high economic need. A primary goal of the grant program is to support collective action to change systems behavior in order to overcome barriers or access opportunities. The impact and outcomes of the identified projects must benefit the lives of people with low to moderate incomes.

There are three phases. Phase one was submitting a letter of interest. Teams then prepared and submitted a design application due January 31, 2021. Design grants of \$25,000 were awarded to 8 Maine communities to sharpen the goal and strategies, learn with cohort communities through 6 workshops focused on core principles, develop the team and work to advance one idea, define how the team will work together and submit the implementation application.

The Katahdin Region successfully submitted a letter of interest with municipal representation and was 1 of the 8 that were then awarded a \$25,000 design grant. The focus of our grant proposal is on youth education and career development in the outdoor recreation sector by enhancing systems to support youth from early age through early career in place-based education and job training on conserved lands. Our next step is to hopefully win 1 of the 5 implementation grants of \$375,000 – to deploy strategies to address a long term challenge, expand stakeholder engagement, and learn alongside other communities (3 years).

***Jutta Beyer***

Town Manager