

Thriving  
communities,  
thriving coast.



ISLAND  
INSTITUTE





PHOTO BY Peter Ralston

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## The coast of Maine is an extraordinary place...

*instantly identifiable by its iconic fishing villages, vibrant working waterfronts, rugged coastline, and resilient year-round communities. There's no place like it in the world.*

*It's cherished for these attributes as well as less noticeable ones: the light from a storefront at dawn, welcoming lobstermen for a cup of coffee before heading out to haul; the wave of a neighbor as she heads to a town meeting after a full day of work; the children crowded at the end of a town pier, waiting to plunge into the icy water as the ferry pulls away. Underlying this familiar activity is a shared commitment: to neighbors, community, natural resources, and our future.*

*The years ahead will bring dramatic, unprecedented change. Warming waters, sea level rise, and demographic shifts threaten our fisheries and our way of life.*

*Fortunately, we have an opportunity to prepare—and our coast has never had greater potential to overcome the challenges before it. The Island Institute, as a trusted community partner for 34 years, is ready to invest in broadband, leadership, and other strategies to build local resilience.*

*With your support, Maine communities will thrive and lead as models of sustainability.*

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# A Climate of Change

*Maine's waters are warming faster than anywhere else in the U.S.*

*In the last 20 years, fisheries diversity has declined by 70%.*

*At this moment, several factors are converging to transform our economy and environment.*

Maine's island and coastal communities are heavily dependent upon a single species: the American lobster. Warming ocean temperatures, however, are driving our lobster east to deeper, colder waters. Ocean acidification poses a new threat to shell-forming organisms. Sea level rise is expected to compromise critical waterfront infrastructure.

Maine is uniquely vulnerable in other ways, too. We have the oldest population in the U.S., which is dependent upon a shrinking workforce for essential care and services. Our residents live in some of the oldest houses, pay some

of the highest energy costs, and have more limited access to broadband than almost anywhere else in the nation. Maine is also the most rural state in the country, with 61.3% of residents living outside cities. Taken together, these challenges threaten to upend our way of life within a generation.

## ***But there is good news.***

Our lobster fishery is more robust than ever, affording us the opportunity to adapt and diversify before being faced with an acute crisis. New opportunities, through improved broadband, aquaculture, and more, have potential to strengthen marine livelihoods and open up entirely new ways of earning a living along the coast. And Maine's heritage is one that values hard work and determination. We're ready to roll up our sleeves.

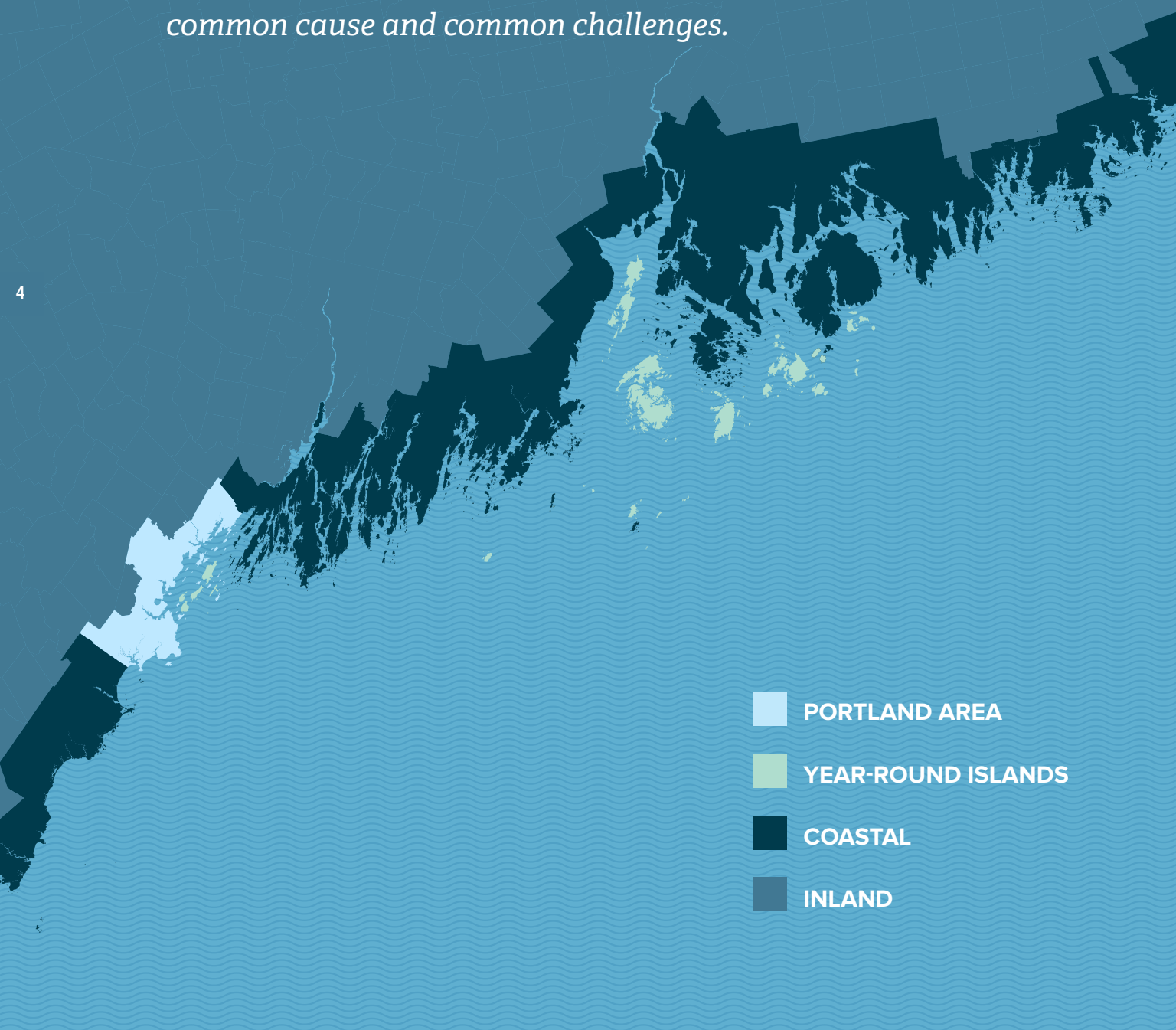


PHOTO BY Joel Woods



# WHERE WE WORK

More than 500,000 people live along Maine’s coast. The Island Institute works in partnership with communities from Kittery to Eastport. We prioritize support for Maine’s fifteen year-round, unbridged islands and coastal communities that share common cause and common challenges.



- PORTLAND AREA
- YEAR-ROUND ISLANDS
- COASTAL
- INLAND

# Why the Island Institute?

For 37 years, the Island Institute has served Maine’s island and coastal communities. Through decades of experience, our organization has **built trusted relationships** with key individuals and institutions across the region. Our staff have **expertise** on issues at the heart of the challenges before us, and **experience** navigating complex dynamics to solve problems. We equip stakeholders with **data and analyses** to support informed decision-making and action. And we leverage a spectrum of **communication** platforms to document lessons learned, develop models that can be adapted for use elsewhere, and affect policy change.

A community-based approach is the foundation for all of our work at the Island Institute. In 2013, we engaged over 500 local residents, partner organizations, and community stakeholders in our most recent strategic planning process. Participants identified three priorities:

Strong Economies

Education and Leadership

Shared Solutions

The Island Institute is committing to these three priorities through 2025—and our work has already begun. We’ve bolstered our capacity in key areas, piloted strategies, and identified those with the greatest potential to achieve results.



A photograph of a woman with long blonde hair, wearing a teal tank top and blue gloves, working on a black mesh oyster farm structure in the water. The background shows a large body of water and a distant shoreline with trees under a clear sky.

# Meeting the Challenge

*To match the anticipated pace and magnitude of the changes ahead, we must dramatically expand and expedite this work.*

Targeted contributions of \$25 million over the next five years will propel our coast forward by proactively addressing current vulnerabilities and building resilience to the changes ahead. The full resources of the Island Institute will be oriented toward this

effort and all contributions made during this period will be recognized as part of our comprehensive campaign.

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**We hope you will join us, and give generously.**

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Aquaculture business development program participant  
Amanda Moser tends her oyster farm in Casco Bay.

PHOTO BY *Scott Sell*



# Strong Economies

*The character of the Maine coast is inexorably linked to the sea. To endure, this character relies on an abundance of marine resources and working year-round communities.*

Our constituents overwhelmingly identified strengthening community economies as their top priority. After careful study, we believe thoughtful investment in improving broadband, diversifying marine livelihoods, and reducing energy costs offers the greatest promise for our future. Furthermore, by

leading in these areas, the coast of Maine will be better-positioned to shape policy and emerging industries in a manner that sustains local livelihoods.

If we succeed, there will never have been a better time to live and work along the coast of Maine.





GOAL

# Reliable, High-Speed Broadband

*Reliable, high-speed internet has become a vital technology across economic sectors.*

For rural areas in particular, broadband introduces new job opportunities, expands markets for local businesses, and helps to attract and retain young families. Its impact is far-reaching, with the potential to transform education, healthcare, and civic engagement.

We are helping Maine's island and coastal communities understand their options, make informed decisions, and

leverage investments to make the most of available technology.

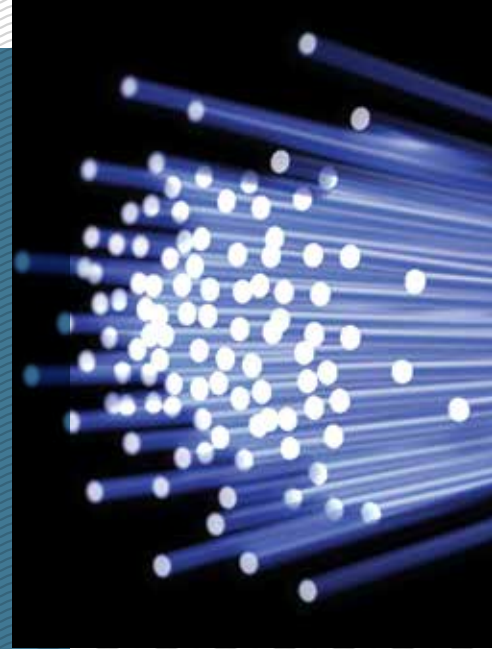
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**Our goal is to make sure that broadband service is available in island and coastal communities by 2025, and that the service available meets or exceeds the national average.**

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*"Broadband is every bit as important for Maine as roads and piers and airports. It provides our island communities and remote coastal locations with the opportunity to overcome longstanding problems of isolation and distance from markets, education, government and healthcare; challenges that have faced these areas for centuries but are more acutely present in today's technologically advanced world."*

LISA LEAHY ConnectME Authority  
Press Conference, Portland, ME





GOAL

# Diverse Marine Livelihoods

In the wake of an unusually warm year in 2012, Maine's lobster catch sky-rocketed and prices collapsed. In August alone, fishermen made 28% less than they had the previous year. This one season underscored our economy's heavy reliance on the healthy population of a single animal, and our vulnerability to environmental and market shifts.

For decades, the Island Institute has worked with fishermen to generate more value at the boat, develop value-added products, and build domestic markets. Now we're using this


experience to increase the resilience of Maine's lobster fishery, while also developing promising new marine-based industries such as kelp and shellfish aquaculture. These efforts will stabilize and grow profitability for fishing families, as well as those of related local businesses dependent on the health of our marine economy.

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**Our goal is to stabilize and diversify Maine's \$2 billion marine-based economy so that it can weather an uncertain future.**

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*Maine's \$500 million lobster fishery has a \$1.5 billion impact on the state's economy and supports more than 8,000 jobs.*



*"After being able to see oyster aquaculture hands-on and learn from the experts, I really felt like this was something I could do."*

**JEFF PUTNAM** Chebeague Island lobsterman and founder of Captain B Oyster Co. Jeff participated in the Island Institute's Aquaculture Business Development program.

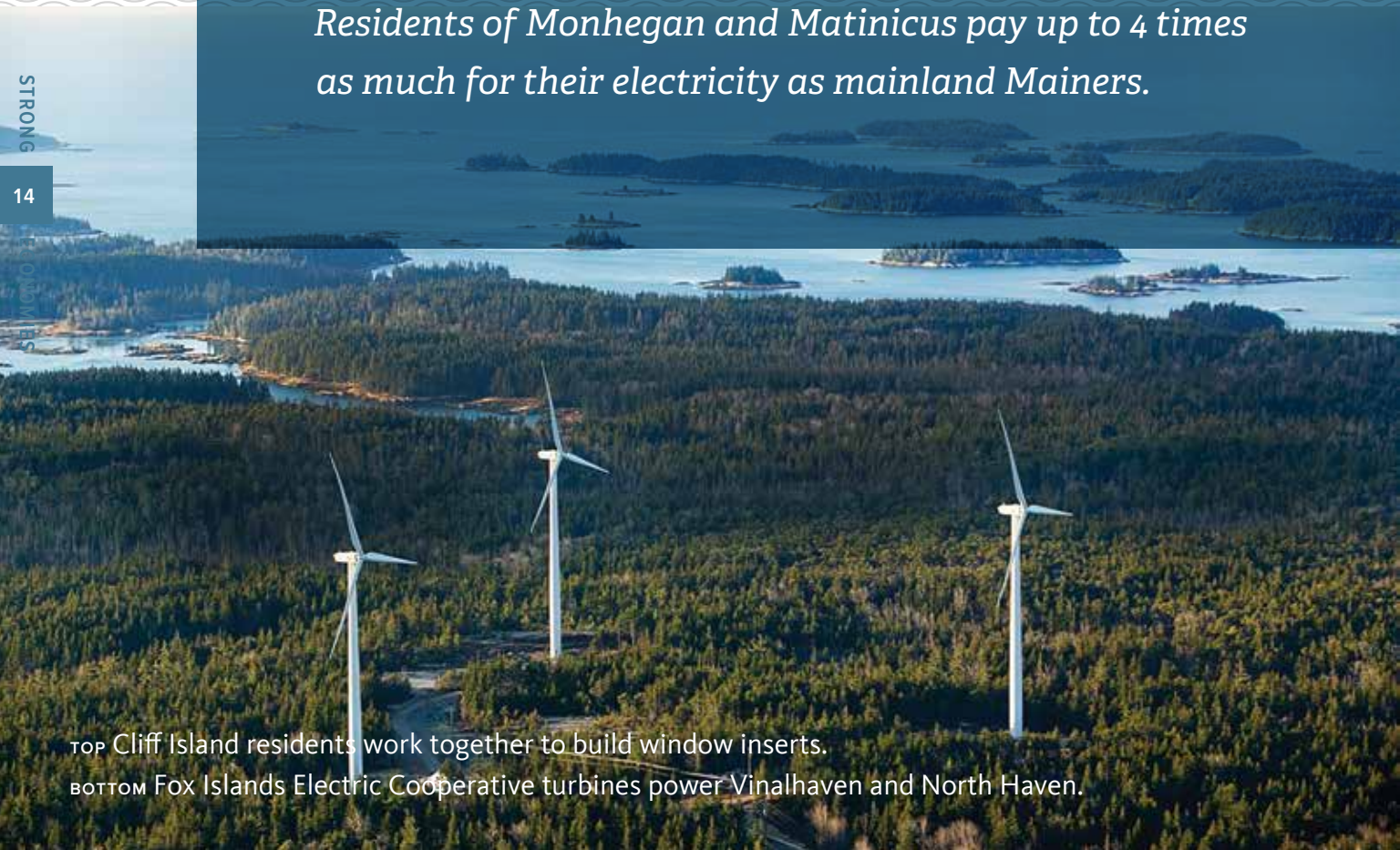
PHOTO BY Gabe Souza





*Mainers spend 9% of their household income on electricity and heating, compared to the national average of 3%.*

*Residents of Monhegan and Matinicus pay up to 4 times as much for their electricity as mainland Mainers.*



TOP Cliff Island residents work together to build window inserts.  
BOTTOM Fox Islands Electric Cooperative turbines power Vinalhaven and North Haven.

## GOAL

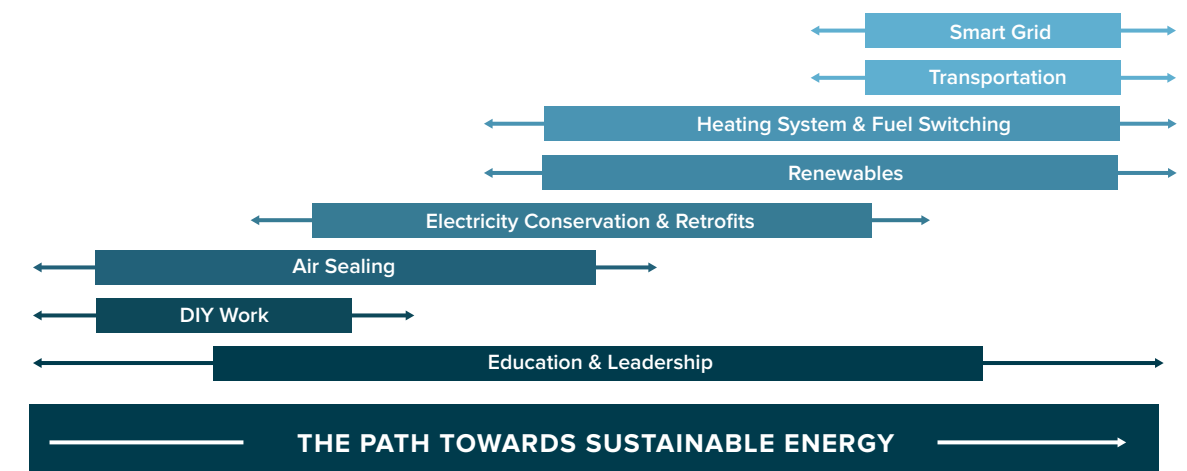
# Sustainable, Affordable Energy

Mainers spend a higher percentage of their household income on electricity and heating than other U.S. residents and are disproportionately dependent on oil to heat their homes. Costs to family budgets and our environment are unacceptably high. At the same time, small rural communities have unique opportunities to chart an alternate course.

We begin by mobilizing communities around practical efficiency steps they

can take to reduce their energy costs and carbon footprint. We then work with communities to set energy goals and transition systems in order to meet them.

**Our goal is to develop safe, reliable, and sustainable energy systems along the coast that stabilize household costs at or below the national average.**





GOAL

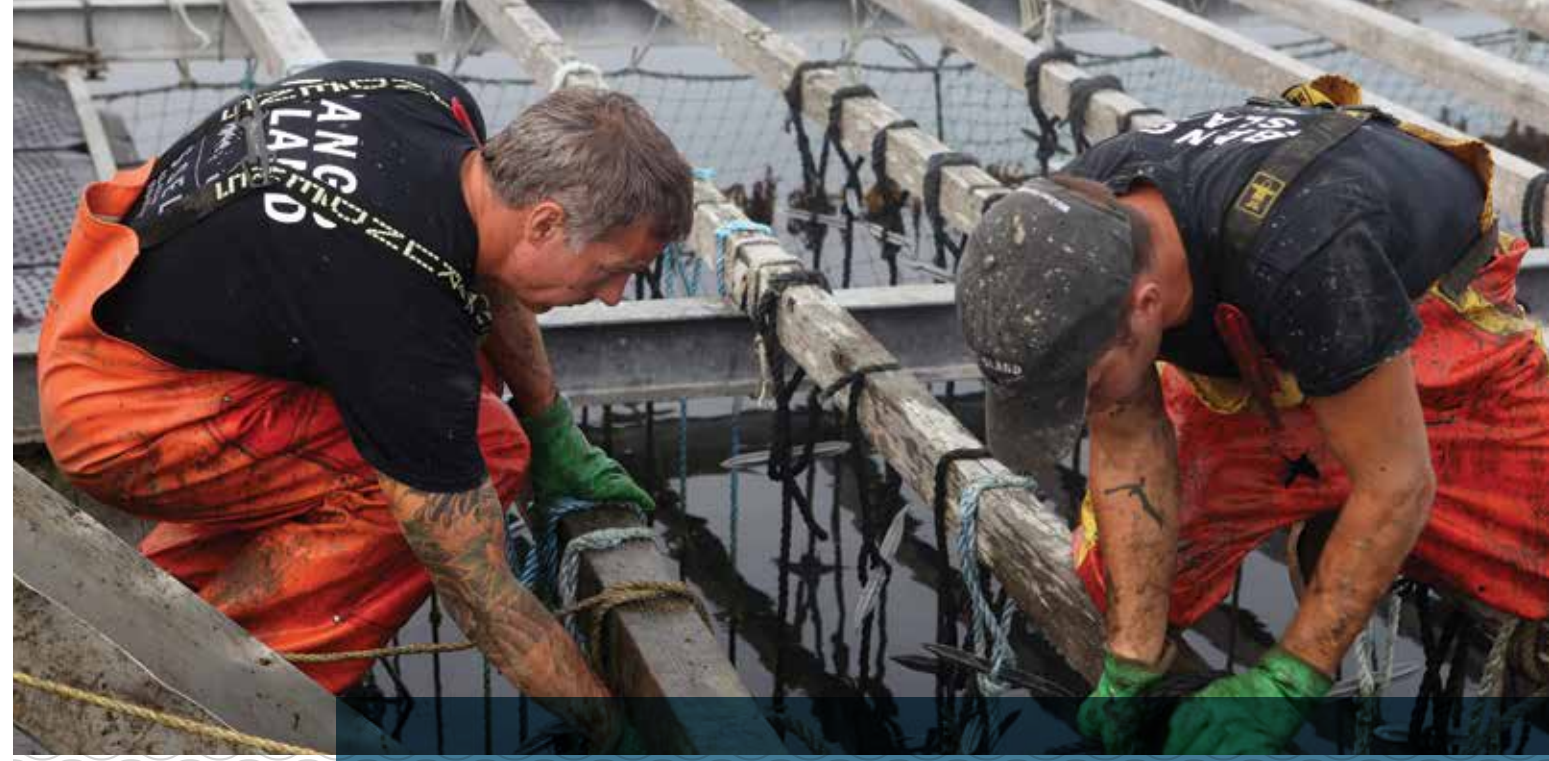
# Impact Capital

Grants, loans, and investments are important tools for advancing economic development, especially when it comes to growing a business or modernizing or upgrading infrastructure. Funding for research and feasibility studies for new or high-risk projects is also valuable, helping owners and communities avoid costly mistakes and providing the information needed to secure additional investment.

The Island Institute has deployed all of these tools over the past decade. We anticipate that the need for capital will grow as businesses diversify and climate, market, and technological changes stress community

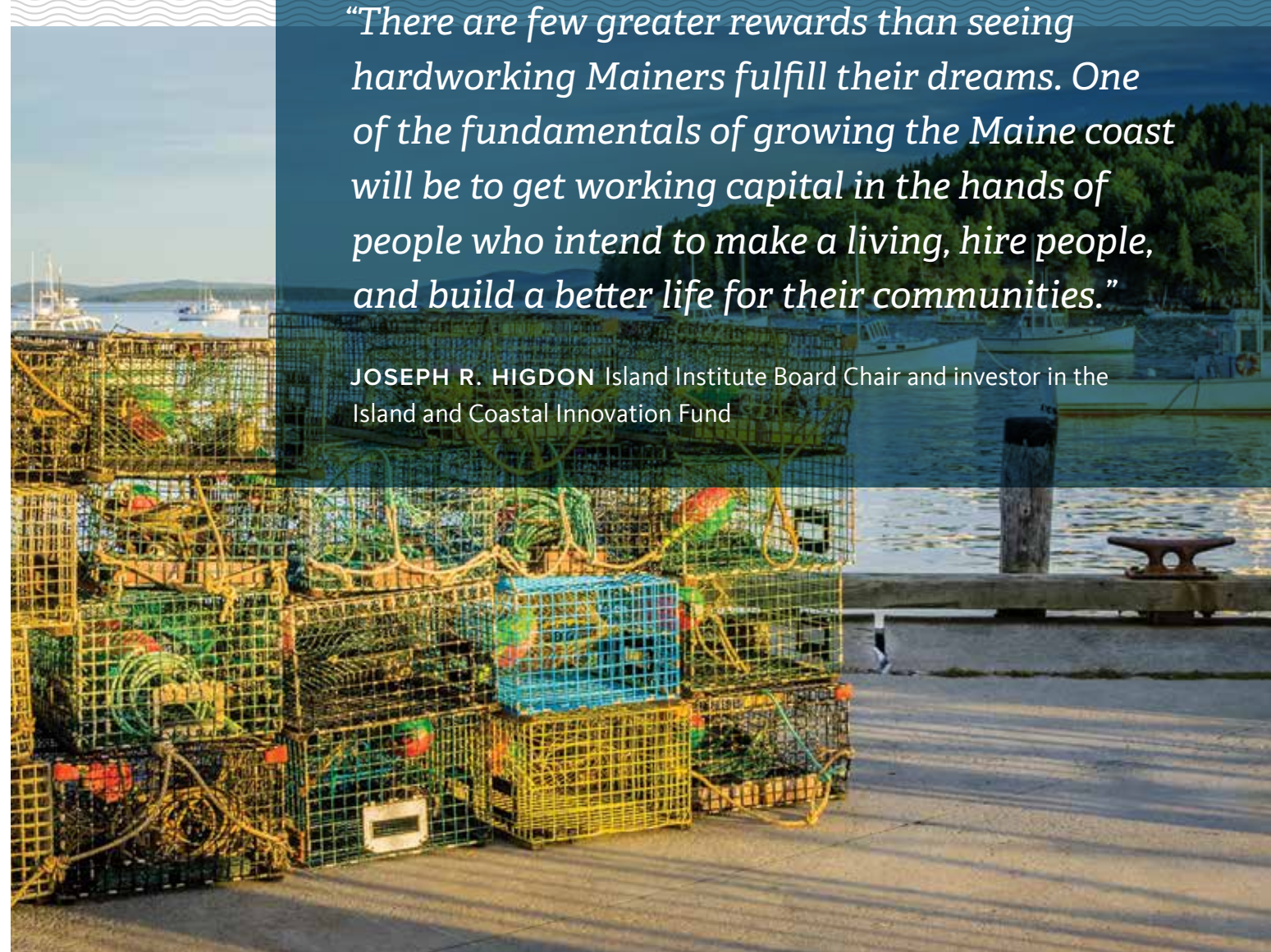
infrastructure. Building upon the recent success of our Island and Coastal Innovation Fund, we seek to create an expanded, standing fund able to meet this need for promising local businesses and infrastructure projects. Projects will be evaluated for funding on both overall soundness of approach and their potential to deliver positive social, ecological, and economic impacts.

**Our goal is to ensure that sufficient patient, flexible capital is available to meet local needs, especially in broadband, diversifying marine livelihoods, and energy system transformations.**



*“There are few greater rewards than seeing hardworking Mainers fulfill their dreams. One of the fundamentals of growing the Maine coast will be to get working capital in the hands of people who intend to make a living, hire people, and build a better life for their communities.”*

**JOSEPH R. HIGDON** Island Institute Board Chair and investor in the Island and Coastal Innovation Fund





# Education and Leadership

*The people of the Maine coast are our most powerful asset. While we cannot fully predict the timing or scope of future challenges, we can build resilience by investing in our capacity to learn, problem-solve, and adapt. Ultimately, we aim to empower local residents to enhance their quality of life and lead their communities effectively through change.*





GOAL

# Quality K-12 Education

*Schools are the heart and soul of small communities.*

Within our region we have schools that have become models for rural education, attracting new families and preparing students for the future. Other schools, however, struggle to maintain enrollment, provide diverse learning opportunities, and adapt to changing educational standards. Every student on the coast of Maine is not yet guaranteed a high-quality K-12 foundation.


With funding from the National Science Foundation and U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Island Institute has run some of the country's most innovative

projects in rural education. Lessons learned have focused our efforts on three areas where we can have the most significant impact on educational quality along the coast: professional development & networking, Distance Learning Technology (DLT), and place-based education.

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**Our goal is to ensure that Maine island and coastal schools lead as models of excellence in public education.**

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A man with a beard and short dark hair, wearing a light blue button-down shirt and a dark tie with small white polka dots, stands in a school hallway. He is smiling and has his hands in his pockets. Behind him are rows of red metal lockers. The floor is a light-colored tile.

*“As an Island Fellow at the Vinalhaven school from 2000 to 2002, I saw how schools serve as a catalyst for bringing people together for positive change.”*

**MIKE FELTON** Island Institute trustee and superintendent of the St. George school district

PHOTO BY Terri Lea Smith



Completion of a post-secondary degree has been shown to boost earnings by more than \$1 million over an individual's lifetime.



67% of Island Institute scholarship recipients complete a post-secondary degree, compared with just 47% statewide.

GOAL

# Post-Secondary Success

*Despite clear evidence on the benefits of higher education, statewide college completion rates are below 50%, and only 41% for students from unbridged island communities.*

The path to success can be even less certain for students who transition directly from high school to the workforce.

Following national research, we are expanding our Island Scholars program to include the student and family support services proven critical to improving graduation rates—and starting earlier. We are building college and career aspirations during K-12 years, offering

comprehensive support from 11th grade through post-secondary graduation for island students.

**Our goal is to increase post-secondary completion rates among island students and to partner with school leadership to identify alternative pathways to help every student reach his or her potential.**



GOAL

# Effective Local Leadership

*Effective local leadership translates into effective government, schools, and organizations. The Island Institute is working with communities to grow the pipeline of individuals willing and prepared to serve in these capacities.*

We offer intensive, sector-specific trainings and exchange trips designed to foster learning across communities and generations. In addition to gaining practical skills, participants build networks that reduce the isolation of leading within a rural context and provide support in tackling future challenges. Elements of leadership training are integrated across all of our

programs, from youth to adulthood, to better prepare all community members for civic engagement.

**Our goal is to broaden participation in local leadership positions, so that a larger percentage of residents in each community are actively working to sustain community life.**

IMAGES RIGHT (TOP TO BOTTOM) Maine island energy leaders learn from Danish counterparts at the Samso Energy Academy in Denmark; Annie Tselikis, former Island Institute Fellow in Stonington, now the executive director of the Maine Lobster Dealers' Association; 2015 Island Institute fellows team up and share their community experiences.





# Shared Solutions

*Time is a precious resource, and it is in especially high demand in communities where there are a finite number of volunteers. When these communities confront a significant new challenge, demands on volunteer time become even more acute.*

The Island Institute aims to alleviate some of this pressure by improving access to reliable information. Furthermore, the Island Institute is deepening its research and communications capabilities, ensuring that local leaders can tap into the best-available data and strategies employed elsewhere to move more quickly toward effective solutions.





GOAL

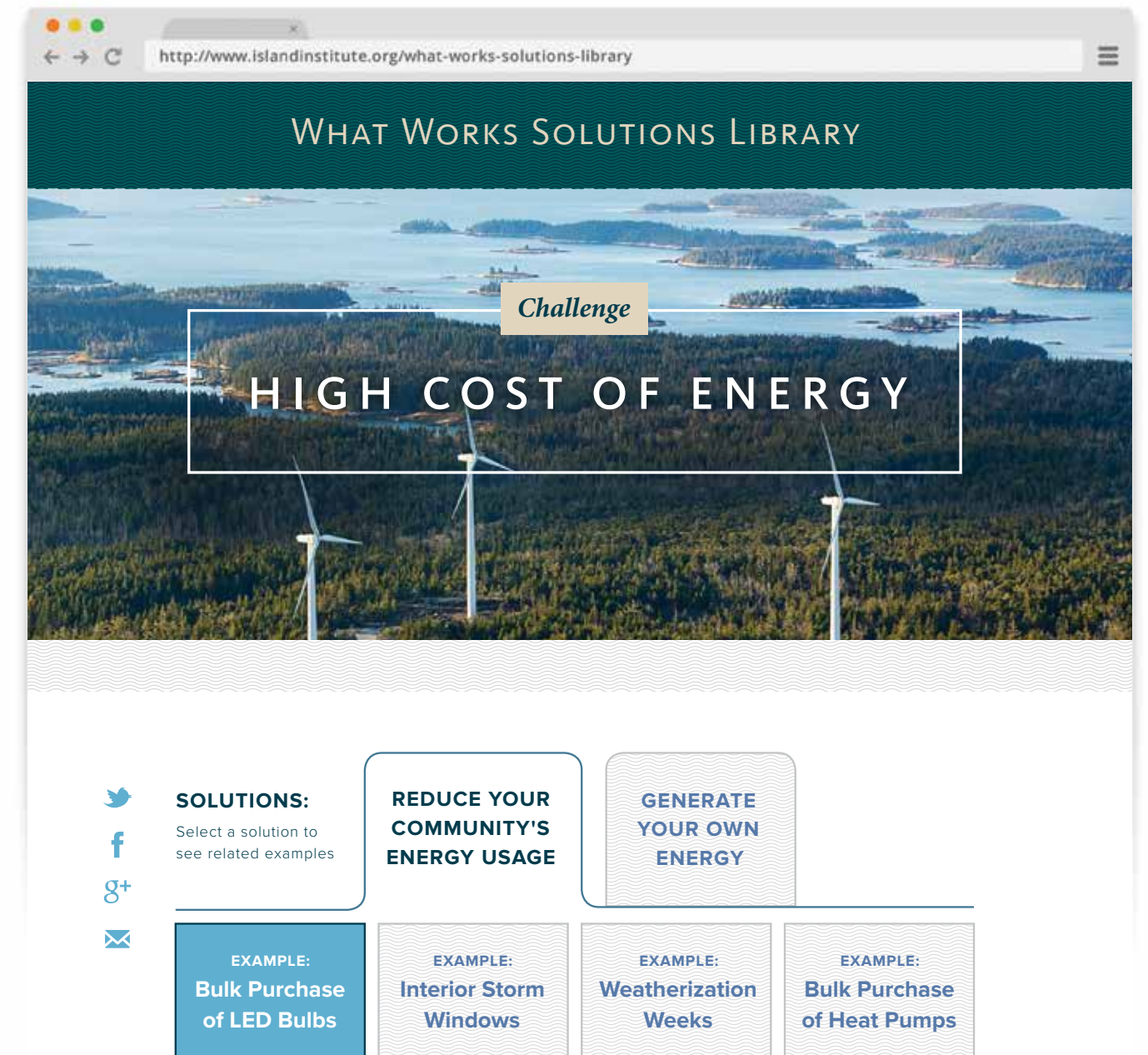
# Accelerated Community Sustainability

*The Island Institute will invest in innovative digital platforms that connect communities to accelerate the pace of solution-sharing.*

New online technologies make it possible for us to document and share knowledge more quickly and broadly than ever before. The **What Works Solutions Library** is one example of how the Island Institute is harnessing this technology to disseminate proven solutions to common community

challenges. Curated entries include practical examples, downloadable references, and videos—all designed to reduce time spent re-inventing the wheel, and to inspire action.

Our digital resources will be fully integrated with our programs, convenings, and print publications.



**Learn how communities are meeting the challenges of high energy costs and other challenges at:**

<http://www.islandinstitute.org/what-works-solutions-library>





**MISSION** The Island Institute works to sustain Maine's island and remote coastal communities, and exchanges ideas and experiences to further the sustainability of communities here and elsewhere.

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PHOTO BY *Bill Trevaskis*