



**Search for the next President
Maine Farmland Trust
Belfast and Portland, Maine**

THE SEARCH

Maine Farmland Trust (MFT), a vibrant, multifaceted organization committed to the future of farming and a national leader in farmland protection and access work, seeks their next President. At a time when farmers face great challenges and increasing development pressures, MFT seeks a leader to implement an ambitious strategic plan to accelerate the pace and scale of their work to meet the most pressing challenges facing Maine farms today. This is a tremendous and challenging opportunity for an innovative, committed leader and ambassador to play a critical role in preserving the thriving agricultural landscape across the state of Maine.

Since its founding in 1999 by a group of committed farmers and advocates, MFT has helped preserve more than 60,000 acres of farmland and supported over 830 farm families across the state. MFT is the only statewide organization dedicated to protecting farmland from potential development and keeping land affordable to farmers, in turn, revitalizing Maine's spectacular rural landscape. Today, MFT has expanded its program areas to not only protect Maine farmland, but increase farm viability by helping farmers thrive and raising public awareness about the important role farms play in communities. Thoughtfully developed to fill the needs of farmers, landowners, and local food markets in Maine, MFT's program areas include farmland protection, farmland access, farm viability, and public outreach, policy, and research. The organization is widely respected for its tradition of farmland protection and stewardship, its expertise, dedicated staff, and fiscal strength with philanthropic foundation support.

Reporting to the Board of Directors, the President will lead a multifaceted organization with a rich history, a vital mission, and considerable promise for the future. The President reports to a 13-member Board of Directors and oversees an operating budget of \$9 million and a staff of 34 based out of Portland and Belfast. Yearly fundraising goals for the next President will be between \$8 to \$10 million a year in efforts to support current philanthropic grant matching commitments through the next five years. The position calls for an energizing, strategic leader, and spokesperson who is deeply committed to Maine Farmland Trust mission for fostering farming, farmland protection, and the future of farming in Maine. Candidates should bring strengths in management, fundraising, and communications along with high integrity, intellectual breadth, political savvy, and an enterprising spirit.

Maine Farmland Trust has retained the services of Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist the search committee in this recruitment. Inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed in confidence to the search firm indicated at the end of this document.

ABOUT MAINE FARMLAND TRUST

Maine Farmland Trust was founded on the belief that farms are fundamental to Maine's future as farmland is the foundation for a future of abundant, healthy food for all. For the past two decades, MFT has been working to protect farmland across the state, support farmers by helping them get on the land and grow strong businesses, and advocate for the important role farms play in the Maine communities. Today, MFT has grown in every dimension while remaining true to its founding mission. With 34 staff and a \$9 million budget, MFT works to support the following programs and initiatives:

[Farmland Protection](#)

[Farmland Access](#)

[Farm Viability](#)

[Public Outreach, Policy, and Research](#)

Planning for the Future

It is a critical turning point for Maine farmers. Between 2012 and 2017, Maine lost 10% of its farmland. Across the state, development pressure is increasing, Maine farmers are nearing retirement age without younger operators working alongside them, and new and beginning farmers are facing challenges in affording and accessing the land and tools they need to grow a thriving business. In 2019, MFT spent time listening to farmers and partners around the state as they embarked on a strategic planning process to accelerate the pace and scale of the work to meet the most pressing challenges facing Maine farms today. Over the next five years, MFT is re-focusing the work to affect change in four important areas in line with MFT's [Strategic Plan](#):

Thriving Farms: Ensure that farmland stays in farming and is accessible for farmers by using strategic, creative, and flexible tools, and increase farm profitability by making sure that farmers get the support they need to establish, grow, and transfer their businesses.

Healthy, Vibrant Communities: Grow the number of communities and people connecting with, eating from, celebrating, and caring for Maine's farms to help boost local economies, increase access to food, and increase the quality of life while supporting our farm businesses.

Stewardship and Climate: Support Maine farmers so that they can adopt and implement climate-smart and other conservation practices to help alleviate the impacts of climate change while increasing farm profitability.

Equity and Inclusion: Increase education and awareness around diversity, equity, inclusion, and the structural barriers that exist in the farm and food system and then apply our learning to adjust our programming, governance, operations, and public messaging to help eliminate inequity.

PRESIDENT

The President is the chief executive officer of Maine Farmland Trust, reporting to and working closely with the Board of Directors, and overseeing all of the organization's activities. The President has overall fiduciary and managerial responsibility for all of MFT's activities and leads a dedicated and high-performing team. The Board is eager to see Maine Farmland Trust continue its growth and leadership trajectory. They will look to the next President to build on the momentum and to identify and seize new opportunities that are well aligned with the mission and bring creativity and animation to the organization's next chapter of service to farmers and the public.

The key objectives for the new President include:

Strategic leadership: The President will continue to coalesce and galvanize staff, board, members, donors, and others in support of MFT's mission and values. With the board, the President will pursue the goals of the current strategic plan and lay the groundwork for the next aspirational plan. The President will support and align current program activity, policy, research, outreach, and engagement initiatives to these strategic priorities. They will ensure Maine Farmland Trust remains nimble and strategically responsive to unexpected opportunities and challenges.

Communications and public representation: The President will serve as the key organizational spokesperson and promote an even stronger and more widely recognized organizational brand. They will sustain MFT's reputation for excellence and trustworthiness. Interact successfully with farmers, landowners, local and state elected officials, government agencies, and community leaders. They will build and reinforce strategic alliances within and beyond the greater agriculture and conservation community to advance the organization's mission, influence public policy, and promote land protection and farm viability. The President ensures all outreach and engagement activities are aligned with MFT's strategic priorities and organizational vision.

Fundraising: The President will lead fundraising through personal involvement, particularly with major individual donors and prospects; through board and volunteer engagement; and in partnership with the development staff. The President will play a lead role in cultivating, soliciting, and stewarding major and planned gifts and other revenue sources for MFT with a targeted \$8 to \$10 million fundraising goal annually. In recognition of its growth and trajectory, MFT received an outstanding opportunity with a \$16 million pledge with a matching component over five years in 2016. The pledge was renewed in 2020 for an additional \$17 million over the next five years to continue this work to protect farmers and help farmers thrive. MFT will work to match the tremendous gift over the next 5 years and look to the supporters and members to support this endeavor.

Staff leadership: The President will serve as a unifying and inspiring staff leader, sustaining a culture that attracts, retains, and motivates a diverse team of highly skilled people. The President will work closely with the Department Directors to develop goals and work plans and oversee and evaluate progress and outcomes in line with the mission and strategic plan. The President will reinforce rigor, quality, clarity, and transparency of communication and decision-making. With

the Department Directors, the President will focus on staff development and support and work to build additional human resources infrastructure for the organization.

Management and operations: The President will ensure that the organization is well managed fiscally and administratively and that its structure and roles align well with its vision and strategy. In close cooperation with the CFO and legal staff, the President oversees the financial and legal filings to ensure compliance with all legal, tax, and administrative filings. The President also sits on the Board's executive committee.

Diversity: The President will pursue vigorously and visibly a commitment to diversity and inclusion among MFT's members, staff, board, volunteers, and partners. They will work to increase education and awareness across the organization and align the goals and learnings throughout the programming, governance, operations, and messaging of MFT to work to eliminate inequity.

Board relations: The President will engage effectively with the Board of Directors. They will draw on members' knowledge and experience and provide them with concise, rigorously presented information to make sound strategy, policy, and governance decisions.

QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE

For this pivotal role, Maine Farmland Trust seeks a leader and spokesperson who is passionate about the organization's mission and legacy, committed to its longstanding standards of excellence, supportive of its culture, and farsighted about its future potential. MFT welcomes candidates with professional experience in the agricultural and conservation communities but is also open to considering applicants from areas such as business, education, and government, provided they bring a demonstrated commitment to the organization's goals and values.

The successful candidate will bring many of the following qualifications and attributes:

- Informed passion and sense of urgency for the mission of MFT. A strong network and knowledge of current issues within the agricultural and conservation space in Maine and New England is preferred.
- A minimum of five years of leadership and effective management within a complex organization, ideally in a conservation or natural resource organization. Proven business acumen, including discipline and focus in setting priorities, meeting or exceeding goals, and running a fiscally sound, resilient, and sustainable operation. Strengths in recruiting, developing, motivating, and retaining high potential staff. Experience working with or reporting to a volunteer board would be an advantage.
- Demonstrated success with building a culture of philanthropy and leading development efforts with comprehensive campaigns. Significant experience and enthusiasm for raising funds from a variety of sources, especially individuals and private foundations.

- Exceptional written and verbal communication skills. Demonstrated experience as a highly effective public speaker and ability to build rapport and develop effective relationships with a wide range of people, including board and staff members, farmers, funders, business executives, donors, and legislators.
- Strengths in team building, effective delegation, and consultative management. Willingness to circulate widely, communicate openly, listen well, and lead through persuasion as well as authority.
- Demonstrated commitment to and experience in advancing diversity and inclusion.
- A broad affinity for the breadth of programming in which MFT engages, as well as the ability to see how agricultural issues intersect with other current social, economic, and cultural issues.
- Experience with real estate transactions, conservation easements, surveys, and appraisals highly desirable.
- An outgoing, open personality. Authenticity and approachability. The ability to connect with people at all levels and from diverse communities. High integrity, gracious self-confidence, and good humor. Tenacity, flexibility, and high energy.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO APPLY

Inquiries, applications, and nominations may be directed in confidence to:

Karen McPhedran, Senior Associate
Isaacson, Miller

<https://www.imsearch.com/search-detail/S7-866>

Applications should be submitted electronically and include a resume and cover letter of 1-3 pages.

***Maine Farmland Trust is an Equal Opportunity Employer. We seek
and welcome a diverse pool of candidates in this search.***