

Two graduate social science positions studying rural youth in forest-dependent communities

The [Leahy Lab Group](#) in the [School of Forest Resources](#) at the [University of Maine](#) is offering two graduate positions (MS or PhD) for a project studying education and employment connections for rural youth in forest-dependent communities. This project is funded by a grant from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture and provides excellent opportunities for students interested in applied social science research and outreach at the nexus of forest and human communities. Students will work as a team with colleagues in the [Department of Forest Engineering, Resources, and Management](#) at Oregon State University, [OSU Forestry and Natural Resources Extension](#), and [UMaine Cooperative Extension](#). Both positions are for two years, beginning in **September 2025**.

Graduate Research Assistantship #1: Social network & skills gap analysis. This research-oriented project is focused on analyzing the primary connections influencing youth transitions from education to employment and developing an understanding of skills sought by rural natural resource employers. Interviews and questionnaires will be used to develop a social network analysis of the connections between natural resources educators, employers, and rural youth, as well as analysis of the gap in skills needed for natural resource careers.

Graduate Research Assistantship #2: Trauma-informed facilitation and best practices. This outreach-oriented project is focused on developing trauma-informed participatory practices, including facilitating focus groups for students and educators. In addition, this project will develop trauma-informed best practices products for employers and formal and nonformal educators. Best practices will be disseminated in print, public presentations and through professional development workshops.

Students in both projects will work together, and with the faculty and student research team in Oregon and Maine in an integrated, interdisciplinary way.

Minimum qualifications

- B.S. degree in a closely related social science or natural science discipline (e.g. economics, sociology, psychology, geography, social work, forestry, biology, environmental science, environmental studies)
- Detail oriented with strong written and oral communication and project-management skills
- Commitment to training in and conducting trauma-informed scholarship and work that advances equity for rural people and places
- Commitment to work as a collaborative team
- Scientific & intellectual curiosity, strong critical thinking skills

Preferred qualifications

- Prior interdisciplinary research or team-based project work
- Background in environmental education, mental health, or experience with trauma-informed

- practices (outreach project)
- Experience in econometric or social network analysis, or with applicable software tools or programming skills (i.e., in GIS, SPSS, R, Python; research project)

The Leahy Lab Group and the University of Maine are committed to inclusive excellence that advances equity and diversity. UMaine is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity employer, and **we encourage applications** from members of historically underrepresented racial/ethnic groups, women, individuals with disabilities, veterans, LGBTQ community members, and others who will contribute to a diverse and inclusive campus community.

Compensation

These positions will provide a monthly stipend (at least \$1,889/month) along with tuition and health insurance coverage. *Year two support is subject to renewal following a satisfactory performance review after the first academic year.* Applicants with existing funding (e.g., NSF, Fulbright) are welcome.

Position location

These positions are **in-person** and located in **Orono, Maine**. **Some travel** for data collection in rural Maine and project team meetings in Maine or Oregon is expected, along with travel related to opportunities for conference presentations and other professional development. The GRA must have a valid driver's license.

The University of Maine is a community of more than 11,900 undergraduate and graduate students, and 2,500 employees located on the Orono campus, the regional campus in Machias, and throughout the state. UMaine is a land, sea and space grant university, and maintains a leadership role as the University of Maine System's flagship institution. UMaine is the state's public research university and a Carnegie R1 top-tier research institution, dedicated to providing excellent teaching, research and service for Maine, the nation and the world. More information about UMaine is at umaine.edu.

UMaine is located in beautiful Central Maine. Many employees report that a primary reason for choosing to come to UMaine is quality of life. Numerous cultural activities, excellent public schools, safe neighborhoods, high quality medical care, little traffic, and a reasonable cost of living make the greater Bangor area a wonderful place to live. Learn more about what the Bangor region has to offer [here](#).

Application Instructions

Applicants must submit a **single PDF** that contains all of the following:

- a cover letter that (1) indicates the position to which the applicant is applying, (2) addresses how the applicant meets the minimum and preferred qualifications, and (3) describes how a graduate degree fits into the applicant's long-term career goals,
- a full-length curriculum vitae or resume,
- an unofficial copy of the applicant's academic transcript(s), and

- the names, email, and telephone number of 3 professional references.

This single document should be emailed to jessica.leahy@maine.edu with “[YOURNAME] – Rural Youth Futures GRA Application” in the subject line, with the applicant’s first and last name swapped in for “[YOURNAME].” *Applications that are incomplete or that consist of multiple documents will not be considered.* Questions about the positions should be sent to this email address as well. Review of applications for both positions will begin on **December 31st, 2024** with interviews the following week. Positions will remain open until suitable candidates have been selected. *The selected finalist will need to complete a separate application to the UMaine Graduate School and students should wait to officially apply until notified they’ve been selected for the GRA position.*