JustME for JustUS
Rural Youth Thought Partnership Initiative

Overview. JustME for JustUS (JMJU) is exploring a formal "Rural Youth Thought Partner" model with aligned organizations across Maine that are working toward thriving rural communities, environmental stewardship, economic resilience, and civic participation. Through this model, JMJU would serve as a strategic collaborator helping organizations meaningfully engage rural young people in program development, outreach, community engagement, storytelling, policy conversations, and long-term visioning. This initiative builds on existing relationships and collaborations with organizations across the state and seeks to strengthen coordination, increase impact, and potentially create more sustainable pathways for shared funding opportunities and collective action.

What It Means to Partner with JMJU. A Rural Youth Thought Partnership could include:

- Strategic input and feedback from rural youth organizers and leaders
- Co-design of community engagement efforts and programming
- Collaboration on outreach strategies to rural young people
- Youth-centered facilitation, storytelling, and listening sessions
- Partnership on grant opportunities and collaborative initiatives
- Shared visibility through communications, events, and digital platforms
- Opportunities to engage young people in policy, advocacy, and leadership development work

Partnerships would be flexible and tailored to the goals and capacity of each organization. As this initiative formalizes, partnerships may include agreements around shared resources, including funding or staff time, to ensure clarity and accountability for all involved. The structure of each partnership will be determined collaboratively based on the depth of the relationship and the nature of the work.

Why This Matters. Many organizations across Maine are seeking meaningful ways to engage younger generations and strengthen connections within rural communities. JMJU brings:

- Deep, trust-based relationships with rural young people across the state
- Experience organizing around civic engagement and environment
- A youth-led and place-based organizing model
- The ability to bridge environmental, economic, and community priorities
- Authentic insight into the challenges and opportunities facing rural youth today

We believe stronger collaboration across organizations can create more impactful programming, more competitive funding opportunities, and more durable long-term change for Maine communities.

How This Is Different from General Collaboration. JMJU works alongside many organizations across Maine in informal and project-based ways. The Rural Youth Thought Partnership initiative is distinct: it is a more formalized recognition that certain organizations view JMJU as a trusted expert and strategic partner on issues facing rural youth across the state. While day-to-day collaboration may continue organically, this initiative creates a defined framework for deeper, ongoing partnership. It will also be featured separately from the general partnerships page on the JMJU website, reflecting its more structured nature.

Benefits to Partner Organizations:

- Authentic engagement with rural youth voices
- Expanded reach into rural communities
- Fresh perspectives and innovative approaches
- Stronger competitiveness for collaborative funding opportunities
- Increased visibility around youth engagement and community impact

Benefits to JMJU:

- Expanded opportunities and leadership pathways for rural youth
- Stronger alignment across statewide initiatives
- Opportunities for collaborative fundraising and resource sharing
- Greater visibility for youth-led rural organizing
- Long-term relationship building with mission-aligned organizations

As this initiative develops, JMJU envisions:

- Development of a broader statewide network focused on rural youth leadership, civic engagement, and environmental stewardship
- Shared storytelling and communications efforts
- Co-hosted events and programming
- Joint grant applications and funding strategies
- A dedicated website page highlighting thought partners and collaborative projects