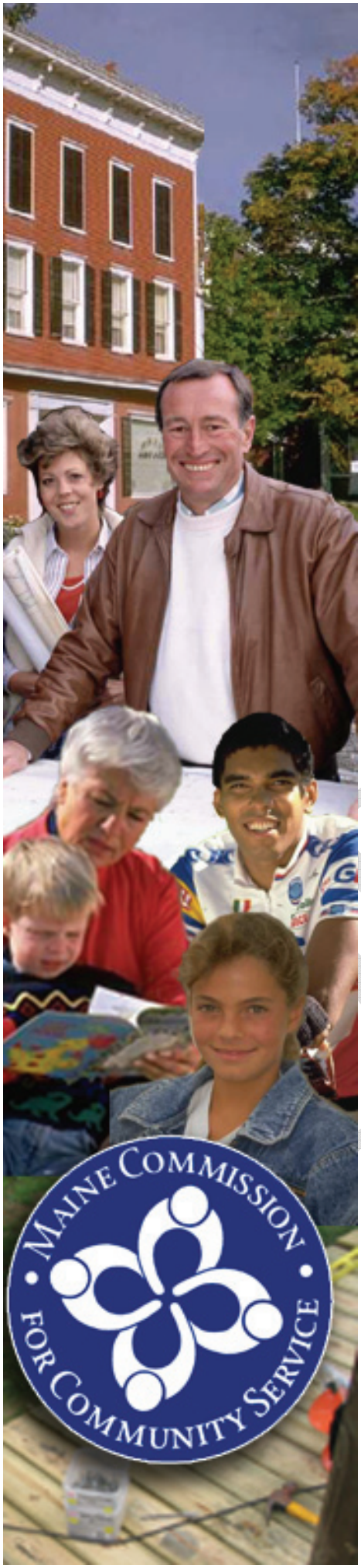

Developing Capacity

In Maine's

Volunteer Sector

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MAINE COMMISSION
FOR
COMMUNITY SERVICE

2006-2009 STRATEGIC PLAN

WWW.MAINESERVICECOMMISSION.GOV
SERVICE.COMMISSION@MAINE.GOV

STATE PLANNING OFFICE
38 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA ME 04333

Commission Members (AT TIME OF PLAN ADOPTION)

Paula Gagnon, *Commission Chair*
Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs
York County Community College

Susan Cheesman
ME/NH/VT Regional Office
Corporation for National Service

Quenten Clark
Superintendent of Schools
MSAD #58

Art Cleaves
Director,
ME Emergency Management Agency
Dept. of Defense, Emergency Mgt, & Veterans Affairs

Peter Crockett
Community Services Liaison,
Maine Labor Group on Health,
Maine AFL-CIO

Greg DeWitt
Clinical Field Supervisor
Merrymeeting Behavioral Health Associates

Gary Dorman
Program Director
Penquis CAP, Foster Grandparent Program

Patsy Dunton
Region I Specialist
Maine Dept. of Education

Carla Ganiel
Partner
Arden Training & Consulting

Ron Holmes
Chief Plant Engineer,
Wausau Paper

CarolAnne Dube, *Commission Vice-chair*
Director: Development & Community Relations
Northern Maine Medical Center

Kenneth Morse
Director, Healthy Oxford Hills/Western Maine Health

Amy Nunan
Program Manager
Getting Healthy

Walter Rosen
Retired Nat'l Academy of Science

E. Frederick Schlutt, Jr.
4-H Foundation director & Specialist
Univ. of Maine Cooperative Extension

Victoria A. Scott
Director of Communications, Penobscot School

Al L. Smith
Community Organizer
City of Bath Community Development

Judith Stebbins
Speech Therapist, Griffiths Assoc

Sara Stevens
Staff, MH Michaud

Peter H. Taylor
Program Officer
Maine Community Foundation

Gilbert Ward
Executive Director
Rural Community Action Ministries

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DRAFT

Table of Contents

Commission Members 2
Table of Contents 3
About the State Service Commission 4
What does it do? 4
The Commissioners 4
Our Foundation 5
The Mission: 5
Our Vision: 5
Values and Convictions: 5
The Context for This Plan 6
Background 6
2006-2009 Goal Summary 6
The Planning Process 6
Implementation 6
A Snapshot of Maine's Volunteer Sector Status 7
Volunteer Management Practices. 7
TABLE 1: Survey Responses Analyzed 8
TABLE 2: Implementation of Volunteer Management Essential Practices 9
TABLE 3: Prevalence of Implementation: Essential Practices in Volunteer Management 10
TABLE 4: Primary Types of Service Opportunities and 11
Impact of Recruitment on Program Delivery* 11
Volunteer Management as a Profession 12
TABLE 5: Job Status, Training, and Experience Levels of Volunteer Program Managers 14
Connecting Citizens with Service Opportunities 16
TABLE 6: Volunteer Program Internet Access and Use 18
TABLE 7: Methods Used by Volunteer Programs to Recruit Volunteers 19
TABLE 8: Use of Multiple Outreach Methods to Recruit Volunteers 19
Targeting Volunteer Efforts on Critical Community Needs 20
The Future: MCCS Plans for 2006 – 2009 22
Goal 1: Maine citizens will volunteer at rates sufficient to address local human and environmental needs. 22
Goal 2: Maine volunteer programs will achieve the maximum possible impact on community needs through high quality, sustainable service. 23
Goal 3: MCCS will identify resources that either increase capacity in community volunteer programs or engage volunteers in meeting priority community needs. 25

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About the State Service Commission

The Maine Commission for Community Service was established in 1994 by Executive Order and under state statute in 1995. The 26-member Service Commission is the State's partner with the federal Corporation for National and Community Service to promote volunteer service in Maine. The Maine State Planning Office provides administrative support.

WHAT DOES IT DO?

The Maine Commission for Community Service …

- Pursues the State's vision for high impact, sustainable volunteer community service.
- Identifies and monitors the capacity, challenges, and emerging issues of volunteer community service programs.
- Develops and implements a 3-year strategic plan that addresses volunteer service issues related to capacity, sustainability, and impact.
- Fosters collaboration among public, private, and non-profit volunteer service programs.
- Provides training and technical assistance to Maine volunteer community service programs.
- Carries out fund-raising efforts to supplement federal support of volunteer service.
- Educates all sectors of Maine about the issues, opportunities, and challenges faced by Maine's volunteer sector.
- Serves as a clearinghouse for people interested in service and agencies recruiting volunteers.
- Sets Maine funding priorities for programs supported by the Corporation for National and Community Service.
- Prepares the state application for national service funds (most often AmeriCorps monies), selects programs to receive grant awards, and then administers the subgranted funds;

THE COMMISSIONERS

In 1994, twenty-six citizens were appointed by Governor McKernan to serve as the inaugural commission members. Since then, each governor has appointed an average of seven people each year to fill naturally occurring vacancies on the board. Commissioner terms of service are three years with an option for re-appointment. The Commissioners are a diverse, bipartisan group of citizens, actively engaged in community service, who represent every region of the state.

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Our Foundation

THE MISSION:

Foster community service and volunteerism to meet human and environmental needs in the State of Maine.

OUR VISION:

Vibrant, productive communities with involved, responsible citizens.

VALUES AND CONVICTIONS:

Volunteer service is essential to community vitality. It is effective as:

- a community building strategy -- harnessing the energy of a few to benefit many;
- a problem-solving strategy -- complementing the effort and energy of full-time professionals with the vision and sense of mission of part- or full-time volunteers;
- a cornerstone of the educational process; and
- a state- and nation-building strategy -- cultivating a sense of civic identity and greater common purpose.

The Commission believes that. . .

- Service is a fundamental building block of a civil society;
- Service cultivates a sense of personal and civic responsibility;
- Service is a strategy for solving a range of community problems;
- Service is an exemplary vehicle for delivering educational content and assessing learning – and an educational aim in itself;
- Service varies in intensity from part-time volunteerism to full-time paid service;
- Service, when it is well-conceived and implemented, can be a cost-effective complement to the work of professionals;
- Service includes a range of activities performed by different people using different means;
- Service is a lifelong habit that can be most easily acquired early in life;
- Service works best when it is community-led and government-supported; and
- Service is a fundamental American tradition.

As a state government body, the Commission sees itself as having four roles:

- Convener – bringing groups together to work jointly on issues of common interest;
- Facilitator – helping groups resolve differences and reach consensus;
- Catalyst – making change happen;
- Partner – combining government resources with others' resources to achieve common objectives.

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The Context for This Plan

BACKGROUND

Development of the Commission's 2006-2009 Strategic Plan reflects the Commission's continued focus on conditions that directly affect the viability and effectiveness of community volunteer service. The goals and outcomes sought are extensions or logical "next steps" of previous targets.

The Commission's accomplishments under each Strategic Plan are documented in its Annual Reports to the Governor and Legislature in accordance with the Commission's enabling statute. All the reports are posted on the internet at www.MaineServiceCommission.gov.

2006-2009 GOAL SUMMARY

GOAL 1: Maine citizens will volunteer at rates sufficient to address local human and environmental needs.

GOAL 2: Maine volunteer programs will achieve the maximum possible impact on community needs through high quality, sustainable service.

GOAL 3: MCCS will identify resources that either increase capacity in community volunteer programs or engage volunteers in meeting priority community needs

THE PLANNING PROCESS

This document and the process used to develop it meet the requirements of both the State of Maine strategic planning process and the Comprehensive State Plan required of states by the Corporation for National and Community Service. The latter is the federal agency whose grants to states for National Service programs are administered in Maine by the Commission and the Maine Dept. of Education.

The process was developed and executed by the Strategic Planning Task Force under the leadership of Commission member J. Alex Hildebrand.* Other members were Fred Schlutt, Chip Curry*, Elisa Paylor*, Susan Cheesman, Paula Gagnon, and Peter Taylor.[1]

IMPLEMENTATION

The Maine Commission for Community Service consistently uses ad hoc "task forces" as the means to accomplish its work. Under its operating procedures, the Commission creates a Task Force by formal vote and includes a "charge" that outlines the scope of work to be accomplished. It is rare that Task Forces are comprised of only commission members. Instead, Commission members recruit stakeholders and provide leadership to accomplish the assigned mission or charge.

Re-organizing and modifying the task forces to align with the aims of this Strategic Plan will happen before June 2006.

[1] The asterisk (*) indicates members whose terms ended before the plan was adopted.

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A Snapshot of Maine's Volunteer Sector Status

Based on anecdotal information and progress on its previous goals, the Commission did not expect major shifts in the issue areas it would need to address. As defined and identified in previous plans, the areas will require long term, sustained attention because they relate to basic capacity and support for community volunteer service.

Although the survey gave respondents several opportunities to identify emerging issues not reflected in the questions, the things cited were elements of the broader issues under consideration. These are the need for

- wide-spread use of all essential volunteer management practices so that local volunteer programs successfully attract resources (volunteers, financial, partners) and operate effectively over sustained periods of time;
- accessible professional development opportunities for volunteer managers that are tied to the profession's core competencies and reflect the novice to expert continuum of experience;
- a comprehensive system that not only connects citizens of all ages to volunteer opportunities but, also, helps volunteer managers in a variety of settings (nonprofit, emergency management, public agencies) with basic program operation including volunteer recruitment, screening, deployment, and support tasks;
- direct, targeted involvement of full-time as well as part-time National Service participants in volunteer programs that address critical local needs, expand involvement of local volunteers, and measurably improve local conditions.

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT PRACTICES.

The field of volunteer management recognizes 22 essential operating practices as indicators of a solid volunteer program. These traits are most succinctly listed in a UPS Foundation checklist for use by funders who receive grant or contribution requests from volunteer programs.[2] The investment guide for its philanthropic peers makes a case for determining the capacity of a volunteer program to manage its human (volunteer) resources and program activity. Having good intentions and recognizing a true local need is not sufficient to ensure a positive impact.

In the opening page of the guide, the UPS Foundation president explains why the quality of volunteer management counts.

> *From UPS's perspective, it comes down to effective human resources management. We are a company of more than 370,000 employees worldwide, but it is not necessarily the size of our employee base that contributes to our business success. It's about having the right tools, training, and systems in place to empower UPS employees to provide the best customer service.*
>
> *This principle is just as relevant to nonprofits.*
>
> *Deploying large numbers of volunteers does not necessarily translate into success for the nonprofit or the community. Rather, success results when an organization*

[2] *"A Guide to Investing in Volunteer Resources Management" on line at UPS Foundation, http://www.community.ups.com/philanthropy/toolbox.html*

mobilizes and manages its volunteer resources for the greatest possible impact on a problem or need.

UPS presents the checklist as an assessment to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the infrastructure that supports an organization's volunteer efforts.

Another way to understand the importance of these traits is to look at how strongly they correlate to the characteristics of organizations that achieve the maximum possible impact. These successful groups use their own resources to leverage additional resources (people, financial, materials). Crossing to the volunteer arena, an organization with strong ties to service recipients and technical expertise could have an impact if it uses those two assets to leverage significant, skilled volunteer efforts. To achieve "maximum possible impact," the agency will have to attract, manage, and account for this human resource, volunteers, in a planned, deliberate, and skillful manner.

In other words, it will have to implement the 22 essential practices if it hopes to make a difference and sustain the work over time.

The MCCS 2005 survey probed the readiness or capacity of Maine volunteer programs to have "maximum possible impact" by explicitly asking questions about volunteer management practices. Respondents were strongly representative of Maine's volunteer sector in that they operated programs in all four arenas of need (public safety, human needs, environment, education), were located in 11 of Maine's 16 counties, engaged as few as 10 and as many as 1,500 volunteers in the prior year, and were managed both by paid and unpaid coordinators. The response set analyzed was from the 128 respondents that operate volunteer programs. (See Table 1.)

Because the Commission has long been aware of the need to strengthen youth volunteer service and increase the types of volunteer opportunities available for youth, the sections of questions about volunteer program operation were structured to allow us to segregate the responses of programs in which youth are volunteers.

TABLE 1: SURVEY RESPONSES ANALYZED

Survey Question	Yes (Respondent Answer)
Does your organization sponsor or operate a program in which volunteers are deployed to perform services related to your mission?	128 of 210 61%
Does your organization have a formal volunteer management system?	62 of 128 48%
Respondents with volunteers aged 18 or under	53 of 128 41%

Each of the 22 essential practices for strong volunteer management were listed and respondents were asked to indicate whether they did or did not follow the practice. Overall, the responses show there is room for improvement if Maine volunteer programs want to have the maximum possible impact on local needs. Only 33% of the programs with formal volunteer management systems have implemented at least 90% of the essential practices.

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In programs with youth volunteers, 43% report they have formal volunteer management systems. Among those, only 26% have implemented 90% of the essential operating practices.

TABLE 2: IMPLEMENTATION OF VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT ESSENTIAL PRACTICES				
Level of Implementation	**By Programs with formal volunteer systems**	**By Programs without volunteer systems**	**All Programs**	**By all programs with youth volunteers**
100% (all 22 practices)	6%	2%	5%	2%
90%-99%	27%	2%	14%	13%
80%-89%	34%	9%	21%	23%
60%-79%	19%	17%	18%	34%
<59%	14%	70%	42%	28%

This profile raises several concerns about the capacity of local programs:

- ✓ Are volunteers provided the best opportunity to succeed in their service? Systems that are weak are not likely to be able to match a volunteer's abilities with the right task, training, and support. Neither are they likely to retain volunteers which means there will be a lost investment related to orienting the volunteer and assigning tasks while there will be a continued high investment needed in ongoing recruitment.
- ✓ Are communities getting quality service from volunteer programs? The impact of volunteer service on a local need is not likely to be consistent or high quality if the system responsible for the preparation and skill of the volunteer delivering the service is weak.
- ✓ Is the citizen experience of volunteering in Maine programs encouraging or discouraging their desire to be involved in community? This is a critical issue for youth volunteers who do not usually have the life experience adult volunteers will draw upon to make up (for at least some period of time) for the gaps in a volunteer management system.
- ✓ Are the resources allocated or granted to volunteer programs resulting in the most benefit for the community? When volunteer management systems are weak, donor investments cannot yield the maximum community impact. Undeveloped or non-existent volunteer management systems do not lead to sustained programs on which the community can depend for consistent, quality service.

A closer look at implementation of each specific essential operating practice gives some hints at why, even though they are seen as "burdensome" or even "unfriendly" by some grassroots programs, the absence of these ways of doing business impact program capacity. In Table 3, the shaded items are those practices which logic would say are the bare minimum or essential starting points for developing volunteer programs.

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TABLE 3: PREVALENCE OF IMPLEMENTATION: ESSENTIAL PRACTICES IN VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT			
Essential Practice in Volunteer Management	**Have Formal Volunteer Mgt Systems**	**No Formal Volunteer Mgt Systems**	**All Programs With Youth Volunteers**
There is a written policy or statement on volunteer involvement	90%	23%	56%
Volunteer involvement is linked to organizational or program outcomes or strategic plan	90%	64%	85%
New paid staff are oriented about why and how volunteers are involved in the organization's work	79%	43%	65%
Designated manager/leader for overseeing management of volunteers agency-wide	82%	43%	67%
There is a periodic needs assessment to determine how volunteers should be involved in agency activities	71%	36%	60%
There are written role descriptions for each type of volunteer assignment	81%	41%	54%
There are written policies and procedures for operation of the volunteer program and involvement of volunteers	89%	32%	63%
The organizational budget shows expenses for the volunteer program	82%	39%	63%
Periodically, the risks associated with volunteer assignments and involvement are assessed	77%	36%	65%
Liability coverage extends to volunteers	77%	55%	69%
There is a volunteer recruitment plan with specific strategies for outreach	73%	30%	46%
Standardized screening and matching procedures for determining appropriate placement of volunteers	74%	34%	50%
Consistent general orientation for new volunteers	84%	45%	60%
Consistent training for new volunteers regarding specific duties and responsibilities	85%	50%	67%
There are designated supervisors for all volunteer roles	82%	55%	75%
Periodic assessments of volunteer performance	52%	34%	40%
Periodic assessments of staff support for volunteers	68%	36%	54%
Consistent activities for recognizing volunteer contributions	85%	55%	79%
Consistent activities for recognizing staff support for volunteers	53%	20%	35%
There is a record keeping system that regularly collects data numerical and anecdotal) about volunteer involvement	87%	45%	77%
Information about volunteer results and issues are shared with board members and other stakeholders at least twice annually	73%	43%	63%
Volunteer manager is included in organizational planning	85%	52%	75%

Reviewing the reports from programs about their volunteer management practices indicates some of the challenges they report with regard to operations might stem from causes much more under their control and, consequently, much easier to address.

TABLE 4: PRIMARY TYPES OF SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES AND IMPACT OF RECRUITMENT ON PROGRAM DELIVERY*		
	All Programs	**Programs with Youth Volunteers**
Type of volunteer opportunities agencies offer to majority of their volunteers		
Episodic (events)	24%	34%
On-going	58%	51%
On-Call (volunteers are pre-qualified; called to serve as needed)	20%	15%
Ratio of volunteer applications to volunteer need in order to meet service demand		
Exceeds need for volunteers	5%	8%
Meets need for volunteers	27%	31%
Falls short of need and somewhat impairs program capacity	47%	48%
Far below need and critically impairs program capacity	6%	9%

For instance, 53% of all volunteer programs said that the number of volunteer applicants is below the number needed and, therefore, the program's ability to deliver services is impaired. Often, the anecdotal explanation is that people are not volunteering at the rate they have in the past. Yet, even in the programs that *have* formal volunteer management systems, the responses show:

- Only 73% have volunteer recruitment plans that target likely volunteers.
- Only 81% have written role descriptions that would tell a potential volunteer what would be expected of them.
- 82% provide designated supervisors who could guide a volunteer during service and link them to the organization's purpose and goals.
- 16% do not orient volunteers

In focusing on adoption of the essential practices and educating programs about the link between volunteer management practices and successful operation, the Commission wants to see the organizations it trains implement at least 85% of the essential practices and, among those practices implemented, include all have a direct tie to attracting and retaining volunteers. (See shaded items in Table 3.)

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VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT AS A PROFESSION

The emphasis on volunteer management as a profession that requires training, opportunities for continuing education, and recognition relates directly to the significant value of the human resource these key people are charged with overseeing.

During the past three years, the Commission inventoried the options for training specifically aimed at the needs of volunteer managers and found very few opportunities. The one day annual state conference (for which the Commission is a co-sponsor) and a mid-coast single day conference offer the most concentrated opportunities. Two graduate programs in nonprofit management cover volunteer administration in the context of one of the courses. Only, three counties have professional associations of volunteer administrators that provide training and development opportunities during meetings. Finally, there are only three people in Maine certified to teach the Points of Light Foundation (POLF) 15-hour volunteer management course and just 2 people certified to lead the IACP Volunteers in Police Service Course. None of these venues specifically target the needs of experienced volunteer administrators. In addition, none of the professional development in Maine is deliberately tied to core competencies of volunteer management.

The very last issue (core competencies), led the Commission to explore the certification program of the Association of Volunteer Administration, the international organization that established standards and exam procedures for professionals in volunteer management. At present, there are no Association of Volunteer Administration (AVA) chapters in the state and, according to AVA records, fewer than 5 certified volunteer administrators (CVAs) in Maine.

The designation and certification system is widely recognized in other states as a mark of professional achievement. However, discussions with AVA revealed that their work to establish the broad categories of competencies had not included delineating the particular skills, knowledge, and abilities related to each category and novice through expert levels of competence.

This discovery led to a partnership between the Commission and University of Southern Maine's Institute for Public Sector Innovation that researched and delineated on a continuum the core competencies. The framework for professional development benefited from advice by AVA leaders and is being vetted nationally during the first quarter of 2006.

In 2004, the highly respected research organization, Urban Institute, published its findings about the current state of volunteer management capacity in the first-of-its-kind study commissioned by The UPS Foundation, the Corporation for National and Community Service, and the USA Freedom Corps. The research was funded by the partners as a follow up to a 1998 UPS study which found a significant percentage of volunteers do not feel their volunteer experiences make best use of their skills and interests.

"Volunteer Management Capacity in America's Charities and Congregations" established several key facts:

- *The percentage of time a paid staff volunteer coordinator devotes to volunteer management is positively related to the capacity of organizations to take on additional volunteers.*
- *The best prepared and most effective volunteer programs are those with paid staff members who dedicate a substantial portion of their time to management of volunteers.*

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- *Regrettably, staff time spent in volunteer management is low. Three out of five charities and only one out of three congregations with social service outreach activities reported having a paid staff person who worked on volunteer coordination.*
- *Among these paid volunteer coordinators, one in three have not received any training in volunteer management, and half spend less than 30 percent of their time on volunteer coordination.*
- *Training staff on how to work with volunteers could address a range of challenges, including recruiting volunteers during the workday.*[3]

Due to the timing of the study's publication, MCCS was able to include questions for volunteer managers in the needs assessment that related to the Urban Institute findings. Forty-seven percent of the respondents were volunteer administrators. One quarter (25%) managed programs within nonprofits while the rest were fairly evenly distributed among school, municipal and state government, civic, faith-based, and higher education volunteer programs. Fifteen of Maine's 16 counties were covered by the respondents. Budgets ranged from $0 (31% of programs) to $800,000 and the number of volunteers in programs represented went from 10 (11% of programs) to 3,000 (a single respondent).

The profile of volunteer managers in Maine has a number of parallels that make the national study's findings relevant for the State. As shown in Table 5, program size is not a significant factor even though it is often presumed that larger programs will have more dollars to put into volunteer programs. In fact, 30% of the programs with *more than* 100 volunteers reported their agency doesn't have a specific volunteer program budget while another 8% reported budgets of less than $20,000. Some good news is found in the fact Maine's volunteer administrators do tend to be paid employees with written job descriptions, even though their duties as "human resource" managers are not generally reflected in the official document.

However, the struggles and challenges reported by Maine programs are quite logical outcomes of the amount of time volunteer administrators are permitted to devote to this vital resource. Even in large programs (more than 200 employees), only 28% of the program managers' official duties specifically relate to the volunteers and only 60% of the people in volunteer manager positions at large programs report devoting all their time to this work.

The content of the job description is a critical element for another reason. If it is not tied to the core competencies for volunteer management, then it is likely the person hired for the position will have a skill set that is not matched well with the tasks he or she faces in managing volunteers. While it is not unusual in other employment sectors to hire someone with a partial skill set and train them intensively around the missing skills, that practice doesn't seem to occur among volunteer managers.

Only 20% of all the volunteer managers (regardless of experience or program size) report formal, in-depth training in volunteer administration as their primary means of acquiring the skills and knowledge they needed. Half the respondents indicated they had to learn primarily from "experience best described as on-the-job trial and error."

Given that 84% of the respondents said they attend outside training and their agencies' pay for that training, it is clear that funding is not an issue for professional development among

[3] Urban Institute, 2004. *Volunteer Management Capacity in America's Charities and Congregations.* Washington, DC. pp 5-6.

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volunteer managers. Rather, it seems that availability of in-depth training and an appreciation for the skills, time, and resources needed to support volunteer programs for maximum possible impact are behind the current status of volunteer management here.

TABLE 5:
JOB STATUS, TRAINING, AND EXPERIENCE LEVELS OF VOLUNTEER PROGRAM MANAGERS

	Number of Volunteers Under Manager's Supervision		
	100 or fewer	**101 to 200**	**More than 200**
Respondents' program size	60%	15%	25%
Role of Person Managing Volunteers			
% of official duties involve volunteer management			
100%	5%	13%	20%
75-99%	12%	20%	8%
50-74%	16%	40%	28%
25-49%	12%	13%	12%
1-24%	25%	13%	20%
Not officially part of my duties	7%	0%	12%
Job description			
Has a written one	88%	93%	92%
Contents do relate to core competencies for volunteer managers	33%	30%	44%
Volunteer managers employed full-time (40 hrs/wk) and devoting 100% of their time to volunteer program	30%	50%	60%
Volunteer manager is paid for work	90%	100%	88%
Experience and Training			
Experience (in years) as volunteer manager			
Less than 1	14%	13%	20%
1-5	34%	20%	20%
6-10	22%	27%	16%
11-15	9%	13%	16%
16-20	9%	7%	8%
21-25	7%	7%	12%
More than 25	5%	13%	8%
Primary means of acquiring skills			
Self study	14%	0%	12%
Formal training in volunteer administration or management (high ed, on-line courses)	12%	20%	8%
Mentored by other volunteer managers	3%	0%	12%
Workshops and seminars (day-long and conferences)	16%	40%	20%
Experience best described as on-the-job trial & error	55%	40%	48%

Between 2006 and 2009, the Commission has pledged to

- ✓ be more deliberate in aligning the professional development it sponsors with the core competencies for volunteer managers;

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- ✓ be more aggressive in public education about the core competencies and their value to volunteer managers and their employers; and
- ✓ work diligently to create a broader array of training and professional development options for volunteer managers in Maine.

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CONNECTING CITIZENS WITH SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

From the Commission's involvement in the Governor's Youth Summit, "Realize!Maine," it became apparent there is now an expectation that information will be available electronically, in one well known and easy-to-use location. In the case of the 18 to 24 year olds, their recommendation was made in the context of trying to connect with new communities as they either moved around within the state, tried to return home after being away for a few years, or as they moved here from another location to take advantage of job, quality of life, or educational opportunities. They stated in no uncertain terms that having to deduce where information might be or gather it from disconnected, multiple sources did not leave them with a positive impression of the state.

Five years earlier (1999), a state advisory council submitted a report to the Executive Branch on the economic benefits of developing a the retirement industry. The Council backed 29 recommendations that would help to move Maine in the direction of creating an environment that is "senior-friendly." Implementing the recommendations was seen as a way to help more Maine natives to retire in their home state and encourage more seniors from away to choose Maine as their retirement destination.

Eighth on the list of recommendations was "create an inventory of opportunities for volunteerism" and the notation that "the rocking chair has been retired in favor of the exercise bicycle, and computers have been embraced by older adults who recognize them as a way to keep in touch … do research on favorite topics, and find new friends with whom to share interests."[4]

Both these state advisory activities are consistent with the public input the Commission receives regarding the difficulty citizens have when they want to connect with a volunteer program.

Outside of New England, the networks of local Volunteer Centers have a major role in volunteer and civic engagement. Volunteer Centers are conveners for the community, catalysts for social action and key local resources for volunteer program design, technical assistance, and training. The size and operating model for each center is based upon community needs, demographic area, population size, collaborating partners, technology, and other factors. Yet, each Volunteer Center's work focuses on:

- Connecting people with the opportunity to serve
    - Link citizens of all ages with diverse opportunities to serve through centralized listings and coordinated recruitment
    - Connect leaders with opportunities to serve on local nonprofit boards
    - Maintain a dynamic system of outreach to volunteer organizations to ensure opportunities are comprehensive and accurate.
- Building the capacity for effective local volunteering
    - Facilitate or directly provide volunteer management training, consultation, and operating information.
    - Track developments in the volunteer sector (research, practice, legal) and disseminate to local volunteer managers and nonprofit leaders.

[4] Maine State Planning Office, 1999. *A Golden Opportunity II*, Augusta, ME. Page 16

DRAFT

- Promoting volunteering
    - Foster the ethic of service locally through public education, social marketing, and advocacy.
    - Support or conduct volunteer recognition activities that have multiple impacts (highlight quality outcomes, provide insight into economic impact, etc.)
    - Serve as the technical expert to policy makers
- Participating in strategic initiatives that mobilize volunteers

Since 1994, the Maine Commission for Community Service (MCCS) has sought to develop a statewide system for connecting citizens with volunteer opportunities and providing technical assistance to volunteer administrators and agencies seeking to establish or strengthen volunteer service programs. During this time, Maine has had two volunteer centers (York and Cumberland Counties) operated by United Ways. They not only convene local volunteer program managers and conducted regional training but, also, in the last three years have provided internet search and referral for volunteer opportunities. The volunteer centers are both located within 50 minutes of Maine's southern border with New Hampshire and their service area encompasses 6% of the state's territory as well as 47% of Maine's population. A third United Way maintains the internet search and referral service predominantly focused on Greater Bangor. Within the past year, a fourth United Way (Mid-Maine) has aligned itself with the national Volunteer Center Network and two others have joined a Commission-instigated partnership to establish a sustainable on-line information/referral center for volunteer opportunities.

Structurally, it seems there is a convergence of organizational interests among United Ways and the commission that finally can support at least the internet tool to connect the public and volunteer organizations. The major piece of work to be done is with the community agencies and programs.

Twice, when the Commission has ventured to implement a statewide internet platform for information and referral, the "push back" from community agencies has been that they were not wired and could not afford to do business vi the internet. They also strongly maintained that their target population for volunteers was not internet savvy, making a web system a waste of time.

Responses to the Commission's survey indicate that, while local perceptions may be unchanged, the behavior of both organizations and the public have changed. Regardless of the program size and administrative structure, 84% of the volunteer programs surveyed reported they had DSL or broadband access to the internet and 77% reach the internet through agency owned equipment. When asked about internet use related to conducting agency or program business, 79% reported "high use" of the internet (See Table 6).

DRAFT

TABLE 6: VOLUNTEER PROGRAM INTERNET ACCESS AND USE							
	Number of Volunteers in Program					All Programs	Youth Volunteers
	1 to 25	26 to 50	51 to 100	101 to 200	Over 200		
Access Type							
Dial up access (primary connection or sole connection)	13%	20%	20%	21%	7%	16%	22%
DSL or broad band access	87%	80%	80%	79%	93%	84%	78%
Means of Access							
Through agency equipment	72%	57%	100%	77%	89%	77%	73%
Access through personal equipment of members/employees	26%	29%	0%	23%	6%	18%	21%
Access only by community partner or public facility equipment (e.g., library)	3%	14%	0%	0%	6%	4%	6%
Degree of use for program business							
High use of internet (including email) for business purposes	92%	77%	78%	65%	79%	79%	70%
Moderate use of internet (including email) for business purposes	6%	23%	22%	29%	13%	16%	26%
Low use of internet (including email) for business purposes	3%	0%	0%	6%	8%	4%	2%
Rare or no use of internet for business purposes	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	2%

As noted in a 2004 federal update[5], 62% of Maine's population now uses the internet. Thus, not only have two significant sectors of the public (newly arriving retirees and young adults aged 18-34) stated they expect to find this information on the internet but also, the issue of online access at an agency level is not a significant deterrent either.

With the integration of electronic communication and commerce into Maine homes and nonprofit organizations, what is surprising is how little change has occurred over the last five years in terms of using online tools to promote programs, attract volunteers, and communicate with the public. Undoubtedly, use of the internet to recruit and deploy volunteers is linked to the fact volunteer programs tend not to have recruitment plans; however, given public expectations of where information will be and the cost effectiveness of this tool, volunteer programs need to learn how to use this medium strategically and in the context of a strong volunteer recruitment plan.

For the period 2006-2009, the Commission will

- ✓ Explore how best to establish local or regional capacity to fulfill all the functions of a volunteer center with an emphasis on dispersing the functions among collaborating partners.
- ✓ Support implementation of at least one new regional comprehensive system that embodies all the functions of a Volunteer Center.

[5] "A Nation Online: Entering the Broadband Age." US Dept. of Commerce, National Telecommunications and Information Administration. September 2004.

DRAFT

- ✓ Conduct a strong educational campaign about the traits of successful volunteer recruitment with an emphasis on planned strategies, marketing principles, and using cost effective outreach strategies.
- ✓ Strongly promote use of the new online volunteer tool (VolunteerMaine.org) among local service programs as a part of our educational emphasis on strategic volunteer recruitment.
- ✓ Identify ways to sustain the collaboration supporting the statewide online tool.

TABLE 7: METHODS USED BY VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS TO RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS

	All Programs	Youth Volunteers
Word of mouth	84%	91%
News releases or stories	69%	79%
Displays and presentations at public events	63%	66%
Local newspaper listings of volunteer organizations	49%	55%
Posters around the community	44%	40%
List volunteer openings on employment or community internet sites	41%	51%
Joint recruitment with other agencies needing volunteers	40%	43%
Notices in bulletins at places of worship	27%	25%
Volunteer Center listings of opportunities	23%	23%
Notices in local employee newsletters	21%	21%
Other	19%	19%

TABLE 8: USE OF MULTIPLE OUTREACH METHODS TO RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS

	All Programs	Youth Volunteers
Use 1 recruitment method only*	6%	13%
2-3 methods used to recruit	16%	11%
4-5 methods	23%	28%
6-7 methods used in outreach	24%	36%
8-9 methods used	12%	9%
10-11 methods	4%	2%

*All respondents in this category indicated they used only "word of mouth."

DRAFT

TARGETING VOLUNTEER EFFORTS ON CRITICAL COMMUNITY NEEDS

The Commission is directed by its enabling statute to identify the priority needs to be addressed with funding granted for National Service programs (Senior Corps, Learn & Serve, AmeriCorps). The practice has been to apply those priorities to all Commission grant-making (e.g., Martin Luther King Day service projects). By federal and state statute, the needs must fall into one of four categories: human, educational, environmental, public safety. In recent years, emergency preparedness, response, and recovery have been added as a subcategory of public safety.

In 2005, the Commission did a thorough re-examination of the issues which would be funded. Statewide needs assessments done by public and private policy groups were reviewed and the findings identified in each as areas of high need became the items listed in the Commission survey. The full list of categories and needs listed can be found in Appendix A.

The same survey referenced earlier was used to gather public input on this matter. All 210 responses were included in the data. Responses were submitted by people who set public policy (5%), fund volunteer programs (7.5%), provide training or technical assistance to volunteer programs (4%), as well as sponsors and administrators of volunteer programs. All five issue categories were represented with the greatest number of responses coming from human needs and educational organizations.

The organizations were able to bring a broad range of perspectives because their operating territories were varied: 12% were multi-town operations; 21% were county-wide and 22% are multi-county; 25% cover the entire state; and, 15% operate in either one town or one school district. Fifteen of 16 counties were represented among the respondents. (No organization from Franklin County responded.)

The survey asked respondents to first select five issues from each category that were "high need" in their community and rank order those five according to how pressing the issue was. In a second step, respondents were asked to consider their five priority issues in the context of how great an impact volunteers could have on the issue.

The top funding priorities were determined using a combined score for issue rank and volunteer impact. The three issues with the highest scores in each category were then combined into one list and ordered.

In making the decision to limit funding priorities, Commissioners had a thorough discussion about how to balance its preference for locally driven programming and the finite resources allocated to Maine for National Service. These resources – AmeriCorps*State funds and AmeriCorps positions, in particular – are determined using a population-based formula. As one of the small states, Maine's allotment is always the statutory minimum. Therefore, the Commissioners decided it would be more effective to target a small range of problems, letting communities identify which need they wanted to address, and focus resources in those directions.

DRAFT

With that decision made, the needs ranked as the top ten were selected as funding priorities for MCCS grants between 2006 through 2009. The issues are

- Awareness and self-management for chronic medical conditions
- Availability of multi-family, rental housing
- Domestic violence
- Energy conservation, management of home energy costs
- Independent Living by Older Adults (Senior Citizens)
- Literacy among school-aged children
- Nutrition Education
- Poverty
- Skills/Knowledge to secure employment including career or vocational preparation for young adults
- Transportation availability

DRAFT

The Future: MCCS Plans for 2006 – 2009

Goal 1: MAINE CITIZENS WILL VOLUNTEER AT RATES SUFFICIENT TO ADDRESS LOCAL HUMAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL NEEDS.

Objective 1a

By 2009, no less than 35% of Maine adults will devote time outside regular family and work responsibilities to either community service or civic activities.

Measure: "Current Population Survey" annual supplement on volunteering. US Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Most recent bulletin issued December 2005.

Where we are now: In 2004, 30% of Maine adults report they have devoted time outside of regular family and work schedule to a volunteer effort.

Special Note: Until 2003, "Measures of Growth" tracked this indicator of community strength and reported a much higher rate of volunteering (70%) in the final year of tracking this data point. To date, the Commission has not been able to identify the reason for a vastly different finding by the federal survey. The BLS state sample is over 1,000 people and the questions posed are very similar to those used by the Maine Economic Growth Council. The national supplement will be used going forward since it is standardized across all states.

Strategy 1 – Use MCCS outreach resources to leverage promotion and public understanding of the benefits, opportunities, and impact of volunteer efforts.

Strategy 2 – Focus MCCS marketing resources on VolunteerMaine initiatives and develop a branding that is easy for others to use in conjunction with their own identities.

Strategy 3 -- Apply MCCS marketing efforts to high visibility, high traffic, high impact avenues and provide technical assistance to regional or local partners who want to reach smaller target groups.

Objective 1b

By 2009, no less than 50% of Maine school-aged youth will devote time either to community service, civic activities, or community-based service learning.

Measure: Indicator #71 in Maine Marks (www.mainemarks.org)

Where we are now: 2004 date show 48% of high school aged youth reported they spent time doing community activities such as helping out at a hospital or food pantry. On average they devoted 3-4 hours to these activities monthly.

DRAFT

Strategy 1 – Cultivate change in public and nonprofit community volunteer programs so they engage school-aged youth as volunteers (rather than clients) who assist with delivery of mission-related services.

Strategy 2 – Support development of a model community-based service learning program that can be used to demonstrate to local organizations the value and efficacy of engaging youth in local service efforts.

GOAL 2: MAINE VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS WILL ACHIEVE THE MAXIMUM POSSIBLE IMPACT ON COMMUNITY NEEDS THROUGH HIGH QUALITY, SUSTAINABLE SERVICE.

Objective 2a

By 2009, the MCCS status report on the volunteer sector in Maine will show 45% of the volunteer programs with formal volunteer management systems have implemented at least 90% of the 22 essential practices.

Measure: MCCS Survey of Community and Volunteer Programs

Where we are now: 67% of programs with formal volunteer management systems report those systems implement *fewer* than 90% of the essential practices (2005 survey data).

Strategy 1 – Develop training and technical assistance systems for sponsors and staff of volunteer programs in at least 2 regions (e.g., York and Penobscot) so that technical assistance, training, and consultation services are accessible at the local level.

Strategy 2 – Focus MCCS training and technical assistance on developing strong volunteer management systems in agencies that host AmeriCorps volunteers so that 90% implement the essential practices of volunteer management.

Strategy 3 – Identify and provide access to strong on-line training programs related to volunteer administration and promote use across all volunteer sectors in Maine.

Strategy 4 – Identify a means of recognizing and rewarding volunteer programs that implement management systems reflecting all the essential practices.

Strategy 5 – As a companion to the status of volunteer programs, develop and conduct a survey of Maine volunteers to ascertain the quality and personal impact of their volunteer service.

Strategy 6 – Develop a sustainability plan for the Volunteer Maine Partnership.

Objective 2b

By 2009, 85% of volunteer program managers will know if their job descriptions reflect the core competencies for their profession and 100% will report that their official duties explicitly include volunteer management.

DRAFT

Measure: MCCS Survey of Community and Volunteer Programs

Where we are now: Although 87% of all volunteer program managers say they have job descriptions, only 73% are familiar enough with their professions core competencies to say whether the job description reflects them. In addition, 12% report their official duties do not include volunteer management.

Strategy 1 – Conduct an intensive education and awareness campaign targeted at public and nonprofit employers, particularly human resources personnel, as well as volunteer administrators to promote understanding and use of core competencies for volunteer managers (novice through expert) by those responsible for staff development.

Strategy 2 – Purposefully use the core competencies in developing training opportunities for volunteer program managers and indicate in training materials which competencies relate to the content offered.

Objective 2c.

By 2009, 25% of volunteer managers with less than 5 years experience will report they have had at least 16 hours of formal annual training in volunteer administration.

Where we are now: 5% of the volunteer managers with less than 5 years of experience report they have had any formal training in volunteer administration. 56% say their volunteer management training has been "on-the-job trial and error."

Measure: MCCS Survey of Community and Volunteer Programs

Strategy 1 – Increase the number of trainers certified to teach the national 24-hour course on volunteer administration and ensure it is offered at least twice each year with an option for earning CEUs from UMaine. (In 2005, there are 4 people and the course was not available.)

Strategy 2 – Promote formation of at least two additional communities of practice among volunteer program administrators with facilitators who can guide members in self-paced professional development based on the core competencies.

Strategy 3 – Identify effective remote and electronic learning methods that can be used to deliver in-depth training on at least two volunteer management topics (e.g., developing role descriptions; developing recruitment plans). Acknowledge completion by participants in a manner that includes the number of hours.

Objective 2d.

By 2009, Maine will have the capacity in at least three regions to effectively accept, screen, orient, and deploy volunteers as requested by emergency management personnel.

Where we are now: Only York County has the capacity to operate a volunteer reception system during an emergency. In addition, the volunteer programs started under Citizen Corps (VIPS, Fire Corps, etc.) as well as the needs for locally designed responses are not receiving adequate support.

DRAFT

Measure: Report of MEMA, Citizen Corps partners, and Volunteer Center directors.

Strategy 1 – Collaborate with MEMA to develop in two additional regions the expertise to operate a volunteer reception center during emergencies.

Strategy 2 – Develop skills needed to manage a statewide volunteer response through VolunteerMaine.org that is integrated with the new internet based Emergency Operations Center.

Strategy 3 – Develop volunteer responses for the priorities identified by volunteer sectors encompassed by Citizen Corps (health, fire, law enforcement, emergency management) and a support system for the emerging programs.

GOAL 3: MCCS WILL IDENTIFY RESOURCES THAT EITHER INCREASE CAPACITY IN COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS OR ENGAGE VOLUNTEERS IN MEETING PRIORITY COMMUNITY NEEDS.

Objective 3a.

By 2009, MCCS will have a deliberate and formal process both for assessing the resources needed to carry out its work, securing those resources, and sustaining the work over time.

Where we are now: At the 2005 Board retreat, MCCS members identified a number of strategies it wanted to pursue but also realized it needed to acquire and hone skills to achieve the outcomes stated.

Measure: Board self-assessment

Strategy 1 –

Objective 3b.

By 2009, 90% of volunteer service and service-learning programs funded by CNCS in Maine will demonstrate impact and effectiveness related to the priority funding areas for the state.

Where we are now: The federal grant cycle is timed so that this plan goes into effect at the same time an entire new set of grants is awarded. In addition, the state funding priorities were redefined for the first time in 10 years using a public input process that identified the unmet needs communities want volunteers to address.

Measure: Reports of grantees on performance measure accomplishment and evaluations of programs as required under the applicable federal grant provisions.

DRAFT

Strategy 1 – Coordinate grant-making to National Service programs to ensure all grantees are addressing one or more of the critical needs identified as Maine funding priorities.

Strategy 2 – Among AmeriCorps*State programs, emphasize volunteer generation activities that engage individual citizens for at least four hours in service related to host site missions.

Strategy 3 – Increase participation of host site supervisors in training, technical assistance, and development of volunteer management capacity.

Strategy 4 – With the regional CNCS office, develop an "impact report" for Maine that relates grantee data to change in communities, particularly as it relates to funding priorities. Develop a report for the 03-06 grant cycle that can be used as a template for the 06-09 cycle.

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