

Volunteer Maine Jan 2023 - Dec 2023 (DRAFT as of 10/21/2022)

Strategic Opportunities (from Plan) + Internal goals for Commission Operation	Describe the current status (weaknesses/opportunities/missing pieces) of your work in relation to the goal.	Commission/board strategies	Staff strategies	Task force involved or overseeing strategy	Evidence of success or completion.	
A. Excel in the role of National Service grantmaking administration/TTA so that all programs (operating and planning) succeed not only in fulfilling their missions but also in complying with the federal rules. (Impact problem, member development, community engagement, evaluation, recruitment/retention, resource growth)	Commission investment in planning grants commits it to helping those same grantees develop program management skills and program model designs that can succeed in securing operating funds.	Explore option of marrying planning grant to operating grant under formula competition by studying new models adopted by other commissions. <u>Need to incorporate DEI concerns in outreach and recruitment process for grant making. Add questions related to applicant status in re: cultural or level of marginalization - need to fit into state and federal structures</u>	Provide the 5 planning grant organizations with training, technical assistance (including assisting with scoping meetings), and individual grantee coaching around program development tasks grantees need to accomplish.	E&E	Applications from Planning grantees	
	AmeriCorps grantee staff change frequently as people seek other job opportunities or experience life changes. New program staff need training/orientation to grant and program requirements that fall within their role (member management, financial, site supervisor, etc.). One-on-one training is not always the best approach although it currently is the only option			1. Move live virtual trainings (e.g., zoom) to asynchronous platform for on-demand learning, both first time and repeat. 2. Increase individualized coaching to resolve struggles with compliance.		
	All AmeriCorps program staff need tactics to improve/strengthen member and staff training, VRC/emergency response readiness, recruitment success, and member management support in order to have strong community, service, and member outcomes.			1. Foster joint or shared member and staff training among programs that includes using Basecamp as a means of sharing opportunities among programs. 2. Move online supervisor course and VRC training for members to online platform so programs can assign to individuals rather than having to plan and execute for small groups.		
	Grantees, AmeriCorps members, and commission board members do not have a sense of being part of a state or national program. In addition, Commissioners do not have a means by which to connect with programs in the communities.	Develop formal program through which Commissioners are the assigned visitor/representative to a specific program in order to personally understand its mission, provide insight to the full board, and become the "face" of the Commission to the program, its members, and its constituents.		1. Transition Member conference back to an in-person event planned by a cross-program committee of AmeriCorps members. 2. Use the 6-mo recruiter as an opportunity for grantees to synchronize recruitment activities that benefit everyone. 3. Execute a more aggressive message and schedule for recruitment advertising.		
	AmeriCorps grantees continue to submit progress and financial reports that are incomplete or have errors. They also do not fully leverage the program management functions of OnCorps which <u>could aid accurate reporting.</u>			Increase OnCorps training for planning grant and newer operational grantees.		
	Enrollment across all programs during the 2021-2022 year was between 52% and 64%. Historic recruitment methods are not effective, news of the improved living allowance is not reaching candidates, and the lack of affordable housing is preventing candidates from accepting positions.			1. Revive participation in community events that can reach potential candidates and schedule instate as well as regional recruitment outreach. 2. Engage Office Admin in more of the routine content development for online outreach. 3. Restock hard copy materials to distribute to schools and use at outreach events. 4. Increase advocacy/pressure on federal AmeriCorps to provide data from federal application portal so data benchmarks can be established. 5. Expand recruitment beyond schools to community events and gatekeepers. 6. Use fedAC requirement to add staff for recruitment as opportunity to rework and extend site list/contacts for outreach.		
B. Review and develop Commission staff team and board membership so the organization not only achieves its goals but has sufficient human resources to cope with ongoing environmental changes.	Staff roles now 90% filled but 3 positions are project funded and 1 is not full-time. Team integration is basic (3 of 8 have more than 36 mos on job) and coverage of essential admin functions still handed <u>around (that's the 50% position).</u>	Increase General Fund financial resources so administrative position can be full-time.	Track budget process and Commission requests for increases.			
	Major staff leadership change is anticipated within 24-30 months.	Work with consultant to examine need for transition or succession planning and undertake necessary steps.	1. ED will identify state agency representative to participate in transition/succession work. 2. ED will assess what opportunities there are for support of Commission if/when it moves to Secretary of State office.			
	Strategic plan actions are not only distributed across task forces unequally but, also, some task forces have taken on assignments (out of necessity) that are outside their mission.	Reassess task force missions, current opportunities and strategies, and consider realignment of task forces, their missions, and work assignments.				
	Commission has a nearly full board but still has weak or nonexistent connections to essential communities and sectors. Analysis at retreat shows these connections need attention: business, faith-based, public health, public safety, BIPOC, western Maine, eastern Maine.	1. Each task force does an analysis of skill/knowledge needs to inform outreach for public members from communities or sectors where connections need to be stronger. – ?? For Exec ?? Should recruitment be centrally coordinated or left to task forces. 2. Implement plan to augment membership with members of public whose skills and perspectives round out task force.		Each staff liaison will assist task force chairs and members.		
	Climate Corps state law specifies there must be collaboration with indigenous communities.	Climate Corps oversight task force will identify, cultivate, recruit, and support Indigenous representation, collaboration, and voice in CC development.		Climate Corps Coordinator will begin relationship building with communities to understand how they would like to be involved.	R&E	Representation on Commission or Task Force of Maine's Tribes, or other meaningful relationship established (may look like advisory role or Commissioner/Staff attendance at Tribal events).
	Commission statute requires it to negotiate annually a fundraising work plan with its private support organization. This hasn't been done for several years so formerly sponsored and supported activities are either underfunded or on hold.	Help foundation fill out its board so it can meet its goals. Negotiate a work plan. Recruit individuals with fundraising experience for Commission task forces so commission can use its gift authority when possible.		Revisit how staff support foundation and whether the foundation can engage its own admin support.		
C. Strategic Opportunity #1: Serve as Maine's center of excellence on volunteer service. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide consultation and training on volunteer engagement and program operation to individuals and organizations seeking to build their capacity to engage volunteers in effective and efficient service that achieves the intended outcomes. Identify key issues impacting Maine's volunteer sector and Commission grantees that need to be monitored or researched. (Hold on research projects until after next strategic plan.) Provide information and data on the status of Maine's volunteer sector, civic health, and civic engagement. 	Climate Action community lacks volunteer management skills yet relies heavily on grassroots community engagement.	Excellence & Expertise task force will review learning/training needs among Commission constituencies (volunteer managers, National Service staff, climate corps participants, Maine Service Fellows, etc.) to determine where there is synergy and differentiation. For common needs, it will guide development of Commission-sponsored micro-credentialing or online asynchronous training. Task force also reviews any formal or long-term training partnership opportunities.	Work with Volunteer Initiatives PO to pitch Volunteer Management Professional Development to Climate community via conferences, Cultivate attributes of high-quality service corps programs in new grantees/participants of MCCN.	E&E	Delivery of 1 or more programs to climate community on volunteer best practices.	
	Maine agencies (potential Climate Corps sponsors) lack skills in high-quality service corps management					
	Maine Ready platform offers opportunity to build relationships with & among Emergency management and VOAD orgs but is under utilized in "blue skies".			MA: Improve use of Maine Ready platform with development of outreach strategy to keep those enrolled engaged & expand use by agencies. Develop monthly messaging series and increase outreach and <u>training opportunities on regular schedule</u>		
	Need entry-point Vol Management training for AC members to meet contractual requirements			MA: Lead development of Intro Volunteer Management Credential opportunity thru Umaine system (assuming receipt of grant funding)		Enrolled programs in MCCN with content being delivered

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<p><i>End Outcome: Volunteer Maine identifies and responds with appropriate supports to emerging challenges or opportunities encountered by Maine's volunteer sector.</i></p>	Service Enterprise is still under utilized and unknown as a resource to build agency volunteer capacity		Support POVSI in developing cohort and delivering at least 2 cycles per year			
	There is a need for an increased number of available credentials for serving AC, Service fellows and Climate Corps members that can be earned during service		MA: Use of UMAine Credential training process to develop pathway for additional credentials for Climate Corps, Sevice Fellows & AC members			
	Strengthen regular DEI trainings for program directors and staff					
	The rapid acceptance of online learning includes podcasts and vlogs. The VM vlog offers an opporutnity to introduce national views and info about vol mgt issues. The VM vlog needs to occur more consistently.			Create a schedule of speakers and establish routine recording date ea month.		
	The challenges faced by rural communities that need stronger emergency preparedness, EMS and fire services that need a new generation of volunteers, and the proven relationship between teens engaged in meaningful service and lower incidence of risky behavior mean Teen CERTs could be a significant program.			Moving development of Teen CERTs has to follow a more active/driven plan.		
	Longterm impact of pandemic on volunteering is only anecdotal. Need data-based assessment of situation to gauge what Commission needs to do to support/strengthen sector.			Last time we approached assessment, cost was close to \$90K. Likely higher. Need to find funding because fed agency still is not analyzing data gathered each fall by BLS/Census.		
	Service Enterprise is the organizational tool for integrating excellent volunteer engagement into operations and improving agency performance. (It's the complement to individual volunteer management training.) It is not recognized among ME agencies although the ones who undertake the process become huge advocates because of the changes they are able to make			Create a schedule for promotion that takes place in advance of enrolling agencies in process so there is better understanding.		
	Marketing plan that is realistic and takes time constraints inot account that addresses potential memebrs, civically-engaged stakeholders and would-be stakeholders.			Staff leads for Climate Corps, volunteer management, and Maine Service Fellows will collaborate with PIO to develop communication/outreach plans that they will implement under guidance of PIO. Plans to include materials, media, public events, eNews, and website messaging that cross reference learning opportunities.	Comms	style/guide resources for participating organizations in M
	Small communitis targeted by MSF lacks volunteer management skills and resources to yet relies heavily on grassroots community engagement.					
	<p>D. Strategic Opportunity #2: Cultivate young volunteer and service leaders through a newly established formal year of service, the Maine Service Fellows Program. Leverage the impact of volunteer service to meet state need to attract and retain talented young adults.</p> <p><i>End Outcome for service programs - does not cover Alums: Young adults commit a year of service to helping a Maine community address a pressing issue and develop not only a greater understanding of how to have an impact on community life, but also create ties to community that have the potential to become roots.</i></p> <p>(AmeriCorps Alums, Maine Service Fellows, AmeriCorps members, Maine Climate Corps)</p>	Maine Service Fellows and Maine Climate Corps both has "soft launches" this fall. As word gets out post-application windows, it is evident there is strong interest and the number of sponsor inquiries will only grow. Both staff managing these programs are discovering there is a lot of overlap and they are helping community organizations identify which program is best for the local plan and need. It should be noted both positions are time-limited appointments. The current challenges are public awarness, state private and public funding, state govt agency support/acceptance of service programs over apprenticeships, incomplete policies and procedures, and emerging national initiatives that may or may not align with missions of our programs.	Determine the best approach to advising/overseeing both programs so the board's goals and responsibilities as well as community perspective and voice are included.	Develop incomplete internal procedures documents and policies for Maine Service Fellows - including member selection, supervisor manual and reporting documents		
		Develop plan for increasing funding for each program.	Develop and propose criteria and process for programs to be part of Maine Climate Corps Network.	R&E	Enrolled programs in MCCN with content being delivered.	
		Include specific focus on both programs in upcoming strategic planning process.	Refine application and selection initial process for both programs. Develop grantmaking policy and procedures for both programs. Maintain equity lens in development of policies.			
			Create collateral (hard copy and msgs) for staff and board to use in public education about both programs. Ensure accessibility for wide range of audiences.	Comms	Message guides and collateral available for staff.	
			Staff leads on each program work with PIO to develop and implement a public education program that increases community awareness, supports recruitment/placement, and reports impacts of service.	Comms	Comms plan in place for implementation for Spring season: grant application awareness, member recruitment awareness.	
			Support board task force work associated with oversight of each program.	R&E	Productive task force with retention of members and strong attendance.	
			Participate in federal/national and state policy committees whose work aligns with and influences operation of both programs.	R&E	Maine is well-known as a leader for the Climate Corps, nationwide.	
			Monitor funding announcements from other agencies for opportunities to support each program. Proactively develop relationships with agencies and educate them about potential use of programs as a tactic to accomplish their goals.	R&E	New grant/funding streams for Volunteer Maine, grantees and/or partners.	
			Outline training and professional development to be offered across programs for service participants. Develop state-specific training and partner with other states or institutions to access relevant educational programming that does not need to be Maine-centric. ***Is this duplicative of microcredential strategy above?*-KB			
As Commission moved to small AmeriCorps grantees, the smaller programs have better track record for enrollment that bigger programs. At the same time, federal agency concern over enrollment led them to mandate (at least for 1 year) adding staff person to actively recruit for AmeriCorps.		Consider best use of a 6month staffer - what sustainable efforts should be set as outcomes.	Diversify Maine Corps participants. Push programs away from reliance on college recruitment, create a diverse pool and relationships with other recruiters (e.g., military where many interested youth do not qualify). Commit to using Service Year as first point of contact for public.			

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			Related to issue above, the emphasis in ARP and IRA on work training is having impact on view of the value of service for those who serve. Need to offset impression that service doesn't help someone hone or acquire skills useful in employment. Develop "elevator speech" or key message that can be used by staff, board, and partners.		
			Develop strong relationships with high school guidance counselors and college career offices to create reliable "feeder" pipelines for Climate Corps recruitment		
	Commission has developed email list of around 1,000 AmeriCorps Alums in ME. It is a painstaking, hit or miss process based on asking people and social media outreach. AC Alums are valuable leaders in every sector - public, for profit, and nonprofit. They also have skills and understanding of service that Commission could leverage for initiatives and in emergencies.	Include in strategic planning process outreach to AmeriCorps Alums and consideration of how to engage them in implementation of goals/strategies.	Continue communications with Alums, grow the list, offer opportunities for engagement in service projects, as commissioners, on task forces, and as peer reviewers. Work with ASC to identify funder/strategy to develop AC Alum network for Maine that would really work. Maybe Returned Peace Corps model or might be based on higher ed alum model. Longterm benefits for Commission are many.		
E. Strategic Opportunity #3: Volunteer Maine is the only entity, public or nonprofit, that focuses on capacity and sustainability of volunteerism in the public and nonprofit sectors. It is a business-to-business entity meaning: constituents are organizations and individuals who are responsible for volunteer engagement/activity.	All the contraction stalled this out. Meantime, the PIO position is flat out with communication demands.	Rather than try and tease out distinct strategies, the actions to further this opportunity have to be woven into A, B, C, D, and F.			
E.1. MCCS has a unique role to play as a public voice for the volunteer sector that:	Commission could reevaluate strategy for funding authority to take into account that aging in place and transportation are largely addressed by successful programs.				
▲ increases recognition, visibility and respect for volunteer efforts;	Comms Officer capacity to execute plan to his standard. Comms TF members not attending meetings due to scheduling.				
▲ fosters a culture of service and civic engagement; and	Deskside meetings: Capacity and availability impacted project.				
▲ promotes understanding of connections between volunteering, civic engagement, economic and community success.	Letter to the editor schedule: Task Force scheduling conflicts.				
▲ increases recognition, visibility and respect for volunteer efforts;	Comms Officer capacity to support.				
▲ fosters a culture of service and civic engagement; and	Opportunity/Challenge: The climate action community in Maine has deficits in volunteer management practices and lack of awareness of the value of volunteerism.				
F. Strategic Opportunity 4: The Commission's grant making activity is a powerful vehicle for fostering community service and volunteerism that is effective in addressing critical needs of Maine communities. Through the grant process, MCCS will support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new approaches to encouraging rural volunteer service; • volunteer programming that targets aging in place, rural transportation, and food security; • volunteer-powered solutions to these and other emergent community problems; and • building the capacity of grantee organizations to effectively and sustainably engage volunteers. <i>End Outcome: Commission investments in national service and volunteer programs succeed in strengthening communities' capacity to solve local problems through service.</i>	Procurement changed options so Commission moved to RFAs. Commission process hasn't changed much because it must follow CFR requirements for competitions and review of apps. Need further consideration of the "on ramp" for orgz who want to take on service members.	Recommend to Commission a framework of continuum of service options that lines up grant options according to experience/capacity of new potential grantees. The framework could help board members communicate to potential local partners.	Draft continuum proposal with rationale and present to Grant Task Force(?) for discussion.		
	Related to issues above, need to develop a smoother/more thoughtful process for awarding grants that are not federally driven. Issues are not always what to remove but (as just experienced) considering what degree of distinction should there be between national service and state programs.	Revise and recommend to Commission needed changes in grantmaking policies and procedures.	Identify existing Commission grant policies that either do not apply or need revision to fit state programs. Draft revised selection process for state programs that incorporates any flexibilities that allow inexperienced applicants to receive assistance or present in alternate format. (Note: foundations examining their application systems and DEI intersection have some things to say about relying on written apps and requiring full proposals.)	Grants	Revised SOP/Grantmaking policies. Revised Climate Corps RFA.
	The service programs that are government-funded will be heavily impacted by the federal and state Justice40 initiative that makes a commitment to invest 40% of public funds in underserved and/or underrepresented communities (geographic and demographic).	DEI subcommittee of Executive Committee adds Justice40 initiative to its consideration of Commission inclusion, equity, and justice commitment.	Staff participate in federal and state Justice40 workgroups to learn about federal approaches, new tools, state adoption/adaptation of principles and apply any relevant information or tactic to Commission grantmaking.	R&E	Incorporate Justice40 criteria into grantmaking and outreach.
	There is insufficient national service activity in commission funding priorities and in demographically and geographically diverse areas.		Develop relationships with the Permanent Commission and non-governmental affinity groups that can provide introductions to community leaders and insight into community needs that can be addressed by Commission programs. Assist interested communities with developing applications for Commission grants or accessing Commission training.		
	New service programs and improvements in AmeriCorps member service supports are not known to the public so interest in partnerships as waned. Return to in-person gatherings and meetings is reviving opportunity to do introductory meetings and informational interviews with community gatekeepers.		Proactively meet with community groups and agencies engaged in work aligned with commission priorities. Explore their capacity or interest to develop a service project and provide TA. Climate related will be done in collaboration with Climate Corps Coordinator. Effort to result in at least 2 new proposal submissions to 2023-2024 competitions.	R&E	Meaningful relationships established with underrepresented community groups, at least 4 total trips (quarterly).
	The Commission's grant funding is federal, state, and a small amount of private. To maintain or grow support, the funders need to know what impact their appropriations or donations are having.	Develop a funding plan that is diverse and supports Commission goals/strategies.	Include events in which funders (current and potential) participate in outreach/public education plans. E.g., National Service Day at the Capitol, MANP, chamber, MMA conference.		
	Revisit commission funding priorities of aging in place and food security. The UMaine COA AmeriCorps and VISTA have strong programs for both of them. Explore whether there should be new/different priorities for grants.	The cycle for developing a new strategic plan should start in June 2023. Through community listening sessions as well as data review, identify any changes that should be made in funding priorities or approach. (Ad hoc Strategic Plan TF)	Support Commission planning TF.		