



COVER PAGE PLACEHOLDER

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ABSTRACT
Name and Title for Report
Crofton, Maryalice
[Course title]

Three Letters – each showing support for recommendations

Letter from Commission

Letter from Dept of Education

Letter from Secretary of State

**Maine Commission for Community Service
Fiscal Agent Transition from
Department of Education to
Secretary of State**

Report as Requested

State of Maine

131st Legislature

LD 1260: Resolve, to Study Expansion of Civics Education
and Engagement Through the Secretary of State

Respectfully Submitted

By

Department of the Secretary of State

and

The Maine Commission for Community Service

December 2023

Executive Summary

The Maine Commission for Community Service was established in 1994 under Executive Order and then in statute (5 MRSA c. 373 §7501 et seq). The Commission was established as an independent agency with a fiscal agent. The governor-appointed Commissioners are responsible for building capacity and sustainability in Maine's volunteer and service communities through grants (particularly AmeriCorps), training and technical assistance to community volunteer programs, and promoting service as a strategy to solve local public safety, human services, environmental, and education challenges.

When the State Planning Office was closed by the Legislature in 2011, the Maine Department of Education became the Commission's next fiscal agent. In 2019, the Commission began doing business in the public sphere as Volunteer Maine to clarify what type of community services it supports.

While the Commission and Department of Education have had a cordial and collegial relationship, their constituencies overlap very little and their missions are very different. Discussions of the best administrative identity (full budget authority, a new fiscal agent) became a formal exploration and study with the passage of *LD1260, A Resolve, to Study Expansion of Civics Education and Engagement Through the Secretary of State*, in the 131st first legislative session.

This study used structured interviews and outreach to the state agencies connected to this study (the Maine Department of Education (DOE) and the Maine Secretary of State (SOS)), along with independent commissions to determine the benefits and disadvantages of independent commission operating structures. In addition to the review of structures within the state of Maine, the task force also conducted interviews with other state service commissions that could provide insight into potential challenges or opportunities for the Commission due to their similarity in host agency (based within a SOS or DOE), similar state investment or structure (rural and limited resources in nonprofit sector), or other factors the task force suggested be considered. Conversations with the staff and analysis of the existing roles and capacity of the Commission were analyzed to provide a picture of the staffing capacity, needs, and overall structure in connection to the work and outcomes of the Commission.

Appendix C. Details of M CCS Staff Responsibilities and Duties Analysis

Commission Staff Responsibilities and Duties

An analysis of the time and duties of individual Commission staff members was conducted to understand better their current capacity and responsibilities. Through task tracking and interviews, each staff member's core duties were aligned with core areas of M CCS responsibilities. These areas were as follows:

- **Grant Writing/Management** - Activities related to securing and subgranting funding to operate programs or initiatives. Includes grant application/writing activities.
- **Program and Commission Operations/Program Management and Compliance** - Activities to implement the programming, support subgrantees, monitor participant eligibility, and assure that the grant or funding activities are aligned with regulatory requirements.
- **External Relations/Community Engagement** - External activities and work to engage stakeholders in the mission and vision of the Commission.
- **Financial Management** - Activities specific to the financial and fiscal responsibilities of grants and funding management, including activities related to interactions with state-based financial roles in the department and other state agencies.
- **Training and Technical Assistance** - Design, leadership, and oversight of training activities and technical assistance to sub-grantees, community programs, other stakeholders, and program leaders.
- **Policy** - Interactions with state and local government officials including elected officials, engagement in development and support of policy and research.
- **Internal Meetings/Admin** - meetings with other colleagues and M CCS staff and administrative duties related to the role, such as correspondence and record keeping.
- **Professional Development** – Participation in training and learning to build the skills and knowledge of the individual to complete their duties, increase their usable knowledge related to the work of the commission, or master an aspect of their responsibilities.
- **Communications Takeover** - Transitional period where the Public Information Officer position was vacant and duties related to that position were distributed among staff.

This analysis provided information to determine the necessary staffing capacity to continue operating the Commission within a new agency. It offered insight into any additional human capital that would be brought to another host agency's operations. This supports the work towards a sustainability audit of MCCS operations. It also can be used to reflect the investment and use of staffing within the budget with direct tasks and responsibilities.

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Commission Positions

Program Officer, Volunteer Sector Initiatives

Program Officer, Volunteer Sector Initiatives

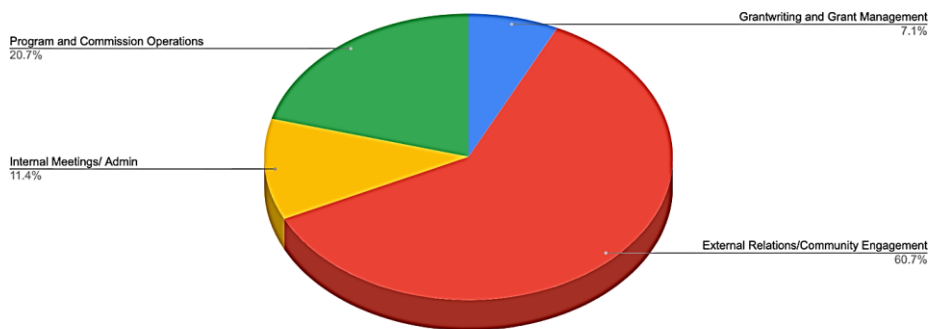


Figure 1 - Tasks and Duties Breakdown for Program Officer, Volunteer Sector Initiatives

From 2020 to 2023, this position oversaw a comprehensive approach to enhancing volunteerism and community engagement through training and technical assistance to community volunteer programs. In January 2021, the budget of \$139,000 focused primarily on COVID support and recovery by helping emergency management and county Emergency Managers to engage volunteers effectively and providing CERT training. (MCCS co-chairs with MEMA, the volunteer and donations emergency response.) This staff role also provided technical assistance and training to community volunteer programs working throughout the pandemic to address local needs. This work requires focused attention which the Commission is able to provide when federal funding allows. The federal grant typically is available for 3 years in every 6 because the small appropriation rotates among the states.

Although federal funding for this work has ended and the services to volunteer programs are severely reduced, a notable legislative goal would be funding a resource hub similar to the one proposed in *LD666: An Act to Support Community-based Volunteer Organizations* which was passed but not funded in the first session of Maine's 131st Legislature. A Volunteer Resource Hub would support community organizations by enhancing skills, data infrastructure for pro bono work, and aiding volunteer management, especially in rural areas.

Grants Officer

Grants Officer

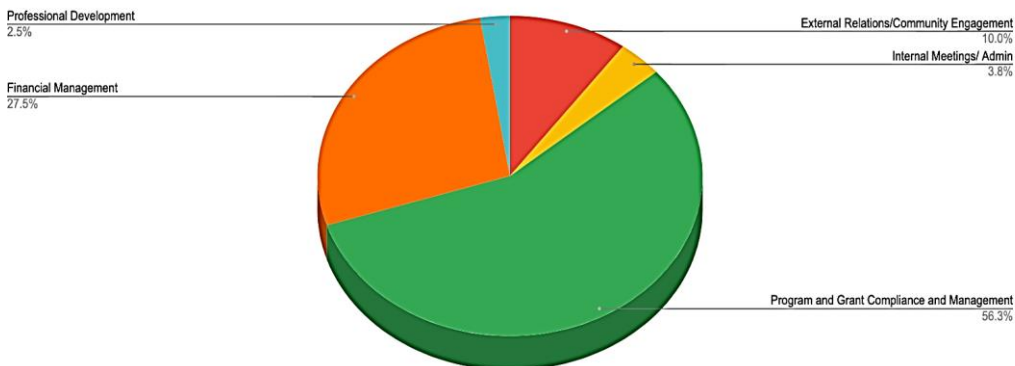


Figure 2 - Tasks and Duties Breakdown for Grants Officer Position

The Grants Officer role is responsible for all AmeriCorps grant functions post-award. The Commission manages eight AmeriCorps operating programs and three planning grants. Tasks cover subgrantee oversight, financial monitoring including match reports, onsite compliance reviews including eligibility of participants, assessing performance, compiling federal reporting, responding to federal spot checks of compliance and eligibility, and tracking frequent changes in federal AmeriCorps policies and regulations. Grant management relies on two systems -- one governs the federal-state relationship including applications, awards, and enrollment of eligible participants; the second pertains to the state-to-subgrantee relationships and covers financial management (budget, expenditures, reimbursements, invoicing), participant records, performance reports, and subgrantee management of partner sites. The Grant Officer is responsible for reconciling the state accounting system with the grant management system and submitting federal financial reports.

Climate Corps Coordinator

Climate Corps Coordinator

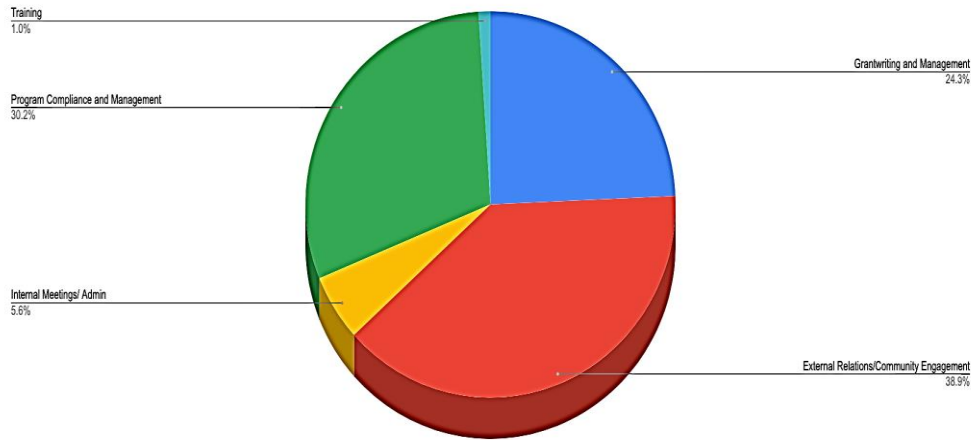


Figure 3 - Tasks and Duties Breakdown for Climate Corps Coordinator

The position is responsible for implementing three aspects of Climate Corps implementation: granting the limited state funds appropriated and providing technical assistance to the grantee; identifying other federal funding sources to support adaptation and climate education activities; developing a network of community programs engaged in the work and providing training as well as technical assistance to them. This role is designated as the Commission representative on two nationwide collaborating groups that share successful models and community volunteer service strategies. Through these committees, the coordinator has ensured a rural state perspective is included in the position papers and model policies that are developed in response to requests from federal policymakers. The coordinator is also a member of the Climate Council's community resilience subgroup that is updating state strategies.

Maine Service Fellow Coordinator

Maine Service Fellow

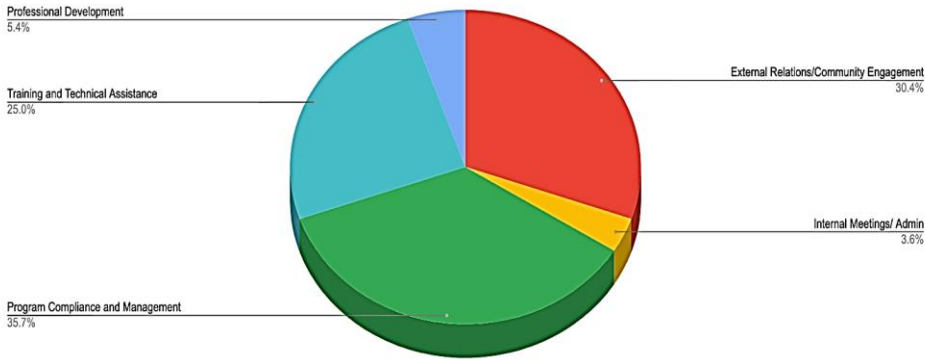


Figure 4 - Tasks and Duties Breakdown for Maine Service Fellow Position

The position is funded through November 2023 to set up and launch the Maine Service Fellows program. The duties include outreach to eligible communities, supporting the Maine Service Fellows Advisory Committee, drafting policies and procedures for program operation, helping rural communities draft work plans and recruit Service Fellows as well as provide supervision and training to the Fellows during service. The Climate Corps Coordinator will assume responsibility for the program after November.

Secretary Specialist (Admin)

Secretary Specialist

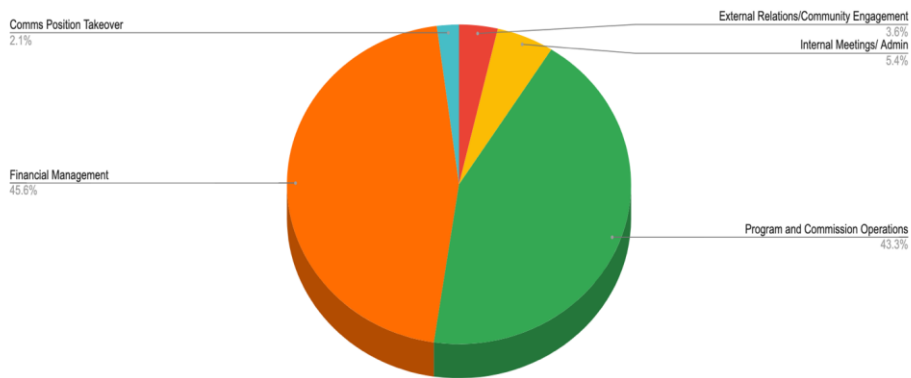


Figure 5 - Tasks and Duties Breakdown for Secretary Specialist

This position is the one referenced as the Commission Admin in this report. It is 1.0 FTE but shared with another office within the DOE because funding only covers 0.5 FTE. This limits the availability of administrative support to MCCA.

There's a clear need for additional full-time administrative support as the current workload only allows minimum tasks to be completed each week with no spare capacity for emergencies or other work usually assigned to an administrative support role. With a schedule that splits the time 50/50 each week, the position also does not have consistency in the ability to respond to communications and tasks, which then requires other Commission staff to incorporate administrative tasks and duties into their work. Consequently, every Commission staff role spends a significant amount of time on administrative and financial duties in the current operating structure.

Program Development and Training Officer

Program Development and Training Officer

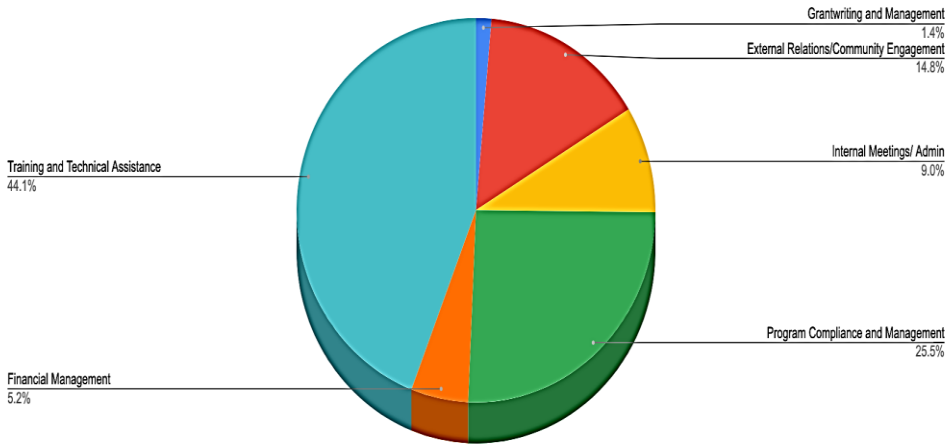


Figure 6 - Tasks and Duties for Program Development and Training Officer

This position leads overall AmeriCorps program development, training, and support. Community agencies that want to operate AmeriCorps programs work with this person to understand requirements, identify models to meet the identified need, and design a program that can be successful in a grant competition as well as ready to stand up within 13 weeks of an award. After grant awards are made, programs go to the Grants Officer to determine if they “can” do something (compliance), and they come to the Program Development and Training Officer to determine “how” they can do something within the regulations and design (coaching). This position is the single point of contact for planning grants and is focused on continuous improvement and coaching with programs.

Executive Director

Executive Director

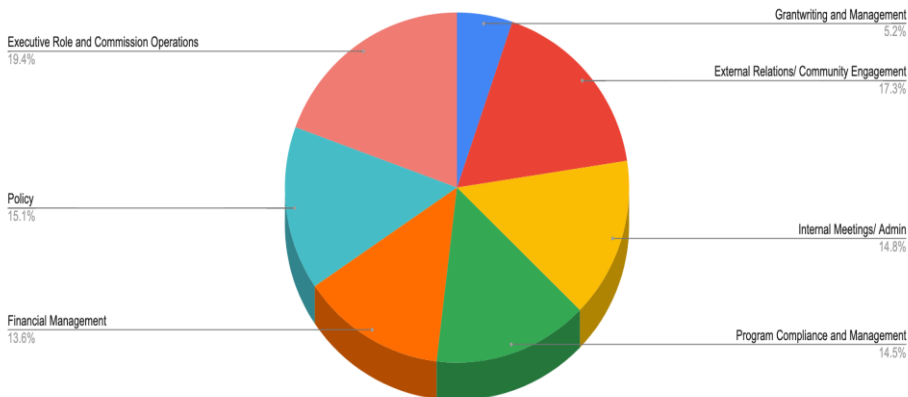


Figure 7 - Breakdown of Tasks and Duties for Executive Director

The current Executive Director role is primarily involved in all aspects of commission operations: federal and interstate relations, state interagency and elected leader relations, board support, communications, financial management, strategic planning, policy, staff supervision and assignments, and more.

The position needs to be reclassified from Public Service Manager I, and the salary increased if moved into the Secretary of State's office. The challenge will be finding the resources to support a higher salary and sustain it outside of the direct funding currently received from the Federal government.

The current Executive Director is pivotal in integrating the Commission's operations into the Department of Education. She serves as a key liaison with appropriate departments and agencies primarily to support financial management and executive administrative processes. She also brings a wealth of knowledge, having spent two decades in the role and within state government in Maine.