

**Volunteer Maine - Commission Investment Fund
2020 Grantee Progress Report**

3-31-2021

77 Number of CIF-supported professional development/training events or service projects

55 Number of organizations participating in CIF-supported training or technical assistance activities

6 Number of commission staff members receiving CIF-supported training or technical assistance

Zach Harder, Jamie McFaul, Michael Ashmore, Bryan Roche, Bev Ludden, Anthony Inhorn

Describe how you have used, or plan to use, data you collected about Training and Technical Assistance (TTA) processes or outcomes during the reporting period to improve CIF-supported activities. Based on the data you collected, what has worked well during the reporting period, and what changes will you make in the coming year to improve the TTA provided by the commission?

Volunteer Maine engaged in an in-depth, 3rd party evaluation of training and support provided to subgrantees during the 2020 reporting period. An outside researcher conducted a qualitative study of the causes of program success and failure among grantees. The resulting data has been used to shape grantee policy and training approaches this year and this will continue to influence the approaches used through the coming year. Key among the findings was that the single largest reason for program failure is turnover among grantee staff. This has led to a greater emphasis on grantee reporting related to staffing changes and to more rapid technical assistance and training provided to new staff. A further finding was that grantee staff most valued on-time personal assistance over scheduled technical assistance trainings by a significant margin. This has led to a change in the structure of both the monthly technical assistance meetings and an increase in the number of individualized program specific trainings offered, as well as a decrease in response time for individual program questions. Volunteer Maine has, in the past, emphasized and encouraged program staff to learn where to find answers for themselves. Our research has indicated that programs staff much prefer and are more successful (and compliant) when they can get a specific answer when it is needed. In 2020, among other CIF supported events, VM hosted 6 full or half day new grantee trainings, 10 monthly technical assistance trainings, 5 planning grant technical assistance trainings, 24 individualized grantee specific training sessions and 18 individualized support sessions for staff of new grantees and newly added staff at grantee organizations. In addition, VM hosted specialized training sessions on Risk Management, Criminal History Check processes, and provided a training to rural development staff from across the state, to School Board members at the state School Management conference and to Commission peers at the AmeriCorps Symposium.

Outcomes (Required): Describe how the activities supported by your CIF grant have resulted in significant and demonstrable improvements in one or more of the CIF Priority Performance Areas included in your application.

Volunteer Maine's CIF grant included work in all of the five priority areas.

Performance Area #1: Increasing new applicants: CIF supported outreach to new potential applicants included 16 training sessions and information provided to over 100 separate organizations, with in-depth development occurring with 12 organizations. This work resulted in awards of three planning grants and two new operational grants (as well as two unsuccessful applicants). We continue to find that the application burden and the required local funding needed to operate AmeriCorps programs leads to a high percentage of those who enter the planning process opting out of submitting applications.

Performance Area #2 Increasing training effectiveness: Work in this priority area led VM to conduct the evaluation of training methods and to collect additional data on needed training topics among grantees. In addition to the changes and adaptations described in the previous narrative. Training continues to focus on enrollment processes, recruitment, background check and risk assessment, branding, position descriptions and member agreements, and high-quality training. Our ongoing OIG audit led to an increased emphasis on financial management training for grantee fiscal staff and, in particular, on documenting match and on creating and retaining documentation for compliance purposes.

Performance Area #3- Evaluation support: VM has continued our contract association with the Data Innovation Project from the University of Southern Maine who provided individualized coaching in data quality and data management to all programs over the year in order to improve program data planning and data collection and reporting performance. Additionally, CIF has support other contract providers to support planning and operational grantees needing specific skill development.

Performance Area #4: Positive AmeriCorps member experience and life-long commitment to service: VM initiated member-led planning for its annual statewide Member Conference and members participating on the planning committee did benefit from the opportunity to plan and design a large-scale conference event. However, the arrival of COVID-19 led to the cancelling of the actual in-person event after initial attempts to postpone and re-schedule failed. VM initiated a series of new virtual recruitment fairs, hosting four events, in collaboration with grantee staff and also provided direct recruitment and branding coaching for grantee staff via the Public Information Officer. Finally, VM has begun rebuilding the Maine AmeriCorps Alumni network after a number of years of inactivity.

Performance Area #5: Increase Cross-stream collaboration: This year, this took the form, primarily, of offering training in the new proposed rules for criminal history check processes. VM hosted a face to face event for AmeriCorps, Senior Corps and VGF staff in February and a follow-up virtual event later in the year. All streams of service were also engaged in training related to the new branding of CNCS as AmeriCorps. The Commission hosted three virtual trainings to explain and support the transition of Maine National Service programs to the new branding requirements issued by the Corporation. Additionally, the National Service and Volunteerism council, made up of staff from all streams of service planned its annual informational day for the legislature in the state capitol building, but the event was cancelled due to COVID-19 when legislative activities were curtailed during the state shutdown. Nevertheless, staff of all programs did have opportunities to collaborate and learn together while benefiting from the varied skills and experiences of the others participating from different national service programs.

Other Narratives (Optional): If required narrative explanations in other sections of the GPR exceeded character limits, provide overflow explanations here.

A significant amount of CIT funding supported a specialized project this year – the consolidation of the Commissions websites into a single website meeting federal and state accessibility standards and meeting the requirements for state agencies to host secure websites within the state firewall. The pre-consolidation websites provide services that impact all of the CIF priorities and most of the Commission strategic goals. One site included access to information for prospective applicants, RFP postings, consultation for National Direct applicants, information regarding all national service programs operating in the state of Maine, and other information specific to CIF priorities #1 and #5. The second website, provided access to virtual and hosted training opportunities, the Commission’s professional development fund application, disaster related volunteering, support for volunteer recruitment, including recruitment for AmeriCorps, Senior Corps and Volunteer Generation Fund grantees, and hosting the state networks of volunteer managers and program directors, addressing CIF priorities #2, #4 and #5. CIF funding allowed us to consolidate, modernize and protect the valuable functions of both sites by combining them under a single web presence. The new website meets state compliance and federal accessibility rules, continues to deliver access to training for program staff, offers network connections that increase collaboration among national service program personnel, includes access to recruitment tools for all streams of service, and provides access for applicants to planning tools, application compliance information and to notices of funding opportunity for all applicants. It also was a key element in the Commission’s own re-branding efforts, offering a visible and public portal under our new name and logo.

It is also important to mention the CIF funded staff time that was deployed to address the COVID-19 emergency. CIF funded staff provided leadership and support to all programs, offered multiple group meetings and alterations to ongoing technical assistance to provide programs updated and clear information related to the ever-changing AmeriCorps COVID FAQ, facilitated connections between VOAD and Emergency Management agencies needing AmeriCorps support, and worked to provide needed assistance to the state Donations Coordination Team, which is co-chaired by the Commission.

Data support compilation

77 Number of CIF-supported professional development/training events or service projects

- 2 Criminal History Check Guidance trainings
- 3 COVID Check-ins with Programs
- 10 monthly Technical Assistance Meetings
- 10 AC Planning Grant Meetings
- 1 MSMA Conference
- 1 MDF presentation
- 1 Symposium presentation
- 1 Risk Management presentation
- 5 Member Conference Prep
- 2 Professional Development Fund
- 5 New Grantee Trainings
- 1 Bidders Conference
- 16 Outreach or Application prep Meetings
- 18 new grantee and new staff support sessions

55 Number of organizations participating in CIF-supported training or technical assistance activities

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| AmeriCorps Resilience Corps* | Maine Energy AmeriCorps Program* |
| AYCC AmeriCorps Mentoring Program* | Maine RecoveryCorps* |
| Colby College Maine Rural AmeriCorps Program* | Main Street Fellows AmeriCorps Program* |
| Cooking Matters AmeriCorps | MidCoast Conservancy* |
| First4 AmeriCorps* | Seeds of Hope AmeriCorps* |
| FoodCorps | Skowhegan AmeriCorps Outdoor Recreation Program* |
| Game Loft AmeriCorps Program* | Trekkers AmeriCorps Aspirations* |
| LearningWorks Aim High AmeriCorps* | Penquis Community Action* |
| Maine Conservation Corps* | Town of Van Buren* |

UMaine Center on Aging*	Maine Adult Education Association
Catholic Charities Maine*	Good Shepherd Food Bank
Midcoast Hunger Prevention*	Healthcare Coalition of Northern Maine
Southern Maine Agency on Aging*	Healthcare Coalition of Central Maine
Window Dressers*	Healthcare Coalition of Southern Maine
United Way of Eastern Maine *	Penquis Public Health District Liaison
Goodwill Northern new England	York Public Health District Liaison
Maine Campus Compact VISTA	Maine Department of Education
Maine Afterschool Sustainability VISTA	Maine Department of Labor
Ending Hunger in Maine VISTA	Habitat for Humanity of Greater Portland
The Apprenticeshop	Furniture Friends
Sailing Ships Maine	Cumberland County EMA
Friends of Quarry Road/City of Waterville	Maine Afterschool Network
Kennebunkport Climate Initiative	Lisbon Conservation Commission
MEMA	Boys & Girls Club of Augusta
Maine DHHS/CDC	Aroostook Area Agency on Aging
Island Institute	Opportunity Alliance
Governor's Office on Policy, Innovation & the Future	Maine School Management Association
Sweetser	Midcoast Charities
	MEANS – Goodwill Hinkley

Programs with an * (asterisk) are funded by Volunteer Maine.

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