



Volunteer Maine

The Maine Commission for Community Service
A Stronger Maine Through Volunteerism



January 31, 2023

TO: The Honorable Joseph Rafferty
The Honorable Michael Brennan
and
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

FROM: Maryalice Crofton, Executive Director

RE: LD 142 *An Act to Fund Climate-related Service Work*

The bill referenced above follows up on legislation enacted in the 130th legislature (LD722 and LD1974) which went before the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources. Because it is several years since the Commission had legislation in front of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, it seems a re-introduction should be first.

The Maine Commission for Community Service, now doing business as Volunteer Maine, was created in 1994 and its responsibilities appear in 5 MRSA chapter 373. Our legislative oversight committee is State and Local Government which is why Volunteer Maine bills do not routinely come to this committee. Yet, when the Department of Education became the Commission's fiscal agent in 2012 on the closure of State Planning Office, our budget moved and that is what brings the Commission before you now.

For nearly 30 years, the Commission has built capacity and sustainability in Maine's volunteer and service communities by funding programs, developing managers of volunteers, raising awareness of issues impacting the community volunteer sector, and promoting service as a strategy to tackle local challenges. As prescribed in federal and state law, those challenges must be related to public safety, health and human services, environmental stewardship, education, and economic opportunity.

The funding granted to community agencies and municipalities predominantly has been from a federal agency that funds AmeriCorps. This national service program has benefited Maine tremendously but has some regulations that limit service opportunities and increasingly prompt states to establish state-controlled corps programs.

The history behind LD142 begins in 2021 with passage of **LD 722**, a resolve to *Study Establishment of a Maine Climate Corps*. The Maine Commission for Community Service (Volunteer Maine) was directed provide the basis for establishment of the Maine Climate Corps, including potential host agencies and long-term service projects. The report was due to the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources in January 2022.

The Executive Summary of the report, *Maine Climate Corps: Inspired by History. Designed for Today*, is attached. The recommendations were based on interviews of over 80 people involved in public, nonprofit, and higher ed climate response actions, a design forum attended by 25 people, a survey of potential community sponsors, and a virtual public comment session held after the final draft was published. The report recommended:

- Maine Climate Corps be structured as a set of programs rather than one corps.
- Any program operating as part of Maine Climate Corps be proposed by a coalition of organizations with one member of the coalition taking responsibility for administering the corps as the lead sponsor.
- Authorize programming in 8 climate-related areas to give Climate Corps the greatest latitude in tackling climate impacts with proven tactics as local needs evolve. The areas are coastal zone impacts, energy, housing, land and fresh-water preservation, education, community resilience, transportation, and public health.

- Prioritizing 11 project types for action, based on the input from communities and what is currently proven to make a difference. The project types are
 - Community Resilience Planning
 - Energy Education and Outreach
 - Making public and nonprofit buildings more energy efficient
 - Home Energy Conservation and Management
 - Emergency Management Community Assistance
 - Increase production and accessibility of locally grown foods
 - Invasive Species Monitoring & Management
 - Shoreline Monitoring & Stabilization
 - Community solar projects
 - Green Schools
- The Maine Climate Corps be created in statute as an amendment to the Maine Commission for Community Service (Volunteer Maine) statute to ensure the purpose, structure, standards, and responsibility for coordination are clearly established.
- A Climate Corps Coordinator at Volunteer Maine provide State leadership. *[Note: The Commission used its direct federal ARP funding to establish the position through December 2024.]*
- Direct state agencies to coordinate climate-related funding for projects so that the human resources Climate Corps brings to bear can be paired with other project financial resources to maximize scale and scope of those funds.

When the LD722 report was submitted to the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources in January 2022, it was accompanied by a draft bill from the committee analyst that would implement the recommendations. That draft became **LD1974**, *An Act To Establish and Fund the Maine Climate Corps Program Pursuant to Recommendations in the Report Required by Resolve 2021, Chapter 25*.

- The original bill requested just under \$1.3 million to support grants to community agencies for climate-related service programs.
- The request was made in the context of federal legislation that proposed funding climate corps programs in 2023. None of the proposals resulted in appropriations.
- The Maine legislature ultimately passed LD1974.
- Pilot funding of \$201,310 was appropriated.
- The funds support 4 corps members plus a supervisor/trainer and were awarded to Downeast Community Partners through a competitive grant process. Funding a supervisor is critical as the lack of investment in management is a leading cause of corps program failure in Maine.

Downeast Community Partners is the Community Action Program of Washington and Hancock Counties. The Corps members and supervisor will conduct energy audits of Weatherization Assistance Program clients' homes and education on energy efficiency and DIY projects for community residents. Corps members will receive extensive training and credentials in weatherization that will serve as an on-ramp to careers in the energy efficiency sector. Climate Corps grant only covers pay and benefits for the Corps members and supervisor. Program must leverage local resources for transportation, training, materials, supplies, and administration. Required performance measures will report total number of home audits completed, total number of community presentations delivered, and total number of homes' energy data analyzed.

LD142 funding request would support 50 corps members and supervisors across multiple programs with project activities determined by local needs.

Hopefully, this background informs your deliberations, and I will be available to answer any questions or provide further information you may need.

Title 5: ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES AND SERVICES
Part 17-B: COMMUNITY SERVICE
Chapter 373: MAINE COMMISSION FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE

§7507. Maine Climate Corps Program

The Maine Climate Corps Program, referred to in this section as “the program,” is established within the commission to provide grants, technical assistance and training to community service corps programs with the mission of responding to the impacts of climate change. Eligible community service corps programs under the program must be designed to: [PL 2021, c. 728, §3 (NEW).]

1. Direct service projects. Conduct evidence-based direct service projects developed through community collaboration, including collaboration with indigenous communities, that address principles of equity, justice and accessibility;

[PL 2021, c. 728, §3 (NEW).]

2. Climate impacts. Address through measurable performance one or more of the following areas: transportation, energy, housing, the State’s coastal zone as defined under the United States Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s coastal zone management program, public health, land and fresh water preservation, community resilience and climate-related education;

[PL 2021, c. 728, §3 (NEW).]

3. Disproportionately affected communities; representation. Prioritize assistance to disproportionately affected communities and ensure that individuals in service positions represent the economic and demographic diversity of communities, including persons who are historically marginalized; and

[PL 2021, c. 728, §3 (NEW).]

4. Additional standards. Meet additional program standards, including, but not limited to, requirements to:

A. Enroll individuals for set terms in service positions; [PL 2021, c. 728, §3 (NEW).]

B. Provide individuals in full-time service positions with stipends, health insurance, liability insurance and accidental death or dismemberment insurance; [PL 2021, c. 728, §3 (NEW).]

C. Provide individuals in service positions with training, education and service experiences that further employability or career preparation; and [PL 2021, c. 728, §3 (NEW).]

D. Meet any other standards set by the commission or nationally for similar programs. [PL 2021, c. 728, §3 (NEW).]

[PL 2021, c. 728, §3 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

1/27/23, 1:03 PM

Title 5, §7507: Maine Climate Corps Program

PL 2021, c. 728, §3 (NEW).

The Revisor's Office cannot provide legal advice or interpretation of Maine law to the public.
If you need legal advice, please consult a qualified attorney.

[Office of the Revisor of Statutes \(mailto:webmaster_ros@legislature.maine.gov\)](mailto:webmaster_ros@legislature.maine.gov) · 7 State House Station · State House Room 108 · Augusta, Maine 04333-0007

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Full report is online at VolunteerMaine.gov/Publications.

Executive Summary

L.D. 722, *Resolve To Study the Establishment of the Maine Climate Corps*, directed Volunteer Maine (the Maine Commission for Community Service) to study three aspects of creating a Maine Climate Corps:

- how best to structure the program,
- what existing service programs might serve as the foundation, and
- what public and private partnerships could be created to accomplish the program goals.

The study used structured interviews of climate experts, researchers, corps leaders in other states, state agency climate program leaders, and community representatives. Using a rating rubric, ten areas of impact were identified as: 1) contributing to the goals of *Maine Won't Wait: the Four-Year Climate Action Plan*; 2) priorities for action that would have broad, near-term impact on climate related issues; and 3) at the point of shovel-ready implementation so that a corps could devote significant time and effort to the work.

Recommendation 1: Maine Climate Corps be structured as a set of programs.

The Maine Climate Corps will be asked to tackle a wide-ranging set of activities that will “move the needle” on state climate change goals. There are some opportunities for efficiencies but there is a greater need to ensure the service activity is technically correct, member training is high quality, a broad and inclusive set of partners are engaged, performance targets are met, and Corps participants are supported by skilled program leaders.

For those reasons, it is recommended that Maine Climate Corps be a set of programs that:

- exhibits the traits of high-quality service programs;
- contributes directly to the goals of the State of Maine’s *Climate Action Plan*;
- individually focuses on responses to climate change that are aligned with the sponsoring organization’s demonstrated area of expertise --
 - Example: A building modification Corps would be operated by an organization with that expertise while education about climate-friendly agricultural practices would be under the purview of another organization.
- implements service activities based on current, good science;
- is deliberate in its actions addressing equity, justice, and accessibility;
- collaborates with organizations and agencies who share the goals of the program but who do not have the capacity to independently operate a Climate Corps program --
 - Example: A regional public agency with expertise in mitigating the impact of rising water levels may sponsor a Corps that helps communities assess risk and identify adaptations or mitigation strategies.
- coordinates goals, service actions, Corps member training, recruitment, and community outreach in a formal State Climate Corps Directors Team convened by Volunteer Maine;
- meets any state or federal standards or requirements set for being identified as a Climate Corps program.

Recommendation 2: Any program operating as part of Maine Climate Corps will be proposed by a coalition of organizations committed to the program’s priority for action and a member of the coalition takes responsibility for administering the program as the lead sponsor.

A survey was used as part of the research for this report. Several questions focused on how many Corps members were needed and whether partners were required to succeed. 86% of respondents said their projects would require five or fewer Corps members each year. 79% of respondents noted that their organizations would engage partners in their work. Based on these responses, the strongest and most cost-effective approach for a Maine Climate Corps would be a coalition model in which organizations,

municipalities, nonprofits, or government agencies with similar missions partner to work on closely related issues. One of those organizations administers the program and other organizations host Climate Corps members.

Recommendation 3: Authorize programming in 8 climate-related areas to give Climate Corps the greatest latitude in tackling climate impacts with proven tactics.

Climate Corps are not demonstration projects but, rather, dependent on research by others to identify community actions that will impact specific problems. As climate scientists study what works best, how to address negative climate change impacts, and track changes in climate, the Corps programs should be able to implement tangible responses in any of these focus areas:

- Coastal Zone
- Transportation
- Energy
- Housing
- Land and Fresh Water Preservation
- Community Resilience
- Education (K-12 and community)
- Public Health

Recommendation 4: Based on current science and expressed need of Maine communities, prioritize for action 11 project areas.

Based on the research done for this report (see Methodology, page 20), Maine Climate Corps programs need to initially work on:

1. Community Resilience Planning

Municipal or regional government bodies partner with a Climate Corps to implement community-based and data-driven climate planning, vulnerability assessments, and flooding assessments, while building local capacity.

2. Energy Education and Outreach

Under the guidance of advising partners, Climate Corps members would educate community residents and organizations about energy use (conservation and management), new sources of energy, and reliable consumer guidance. Tactics would aim to empower residents to take action in their own homes and make informed energy choices both personally and in collective decision-making.

3. “Lead by Example”

Maine local, county, and regional governments, as well as nonprofits, have buildings that need to be made energy efficient. Climate Corps projects that address this need would upgrade the structures and give Corps members opportunities to demonstrate skills valuable to future employment.

4. Home Energy Conservation and Management

Under the guidance of advising partners, Climate Corps members would educate community residents and organizations about energy use, conservation, management, and sources, and provide reliable consumer guidance. Tactics would aim to empower residents to take action in their own homes and make informed energy choices both personally and in collective decision-making.

5. Emergency Management Community Assistance

Small communities lack the capacity that it takes to apply for federal and state emergency management agency assistance related to resilience, floodplain management, and climate change adaptation and mitigation. Corps members would fill that gap by engaging in community outreach and education, community surveys, and gathering data to strengthen local emergency management operations.

6. Healthy Soils and Regenerative Agriculture Outreach and Education

There is a significant amount of carbon sequestering potential for farmers and woodlot owners in Maine. Members engaged in this Climate Corps project would conduct outreach, education, and technical assistance to develop and transition to regenerative practices that maximize carbon sequestration.

7. Local Foods Program

Maine has a goal of sourcing 30% of food consumed within the state from in-state producers by 2030. Climate Corps members would partner with communities to plant and maintain community food forests, engage in public outreach to localize the food system, and build gleaning and preservation programs.

8. Community Solar Projects

In collaboration with communities, Corps members would gather information and data required to successfully site and install community solar projects across the state.

9. Invasive Species Monitoring & Management

Maine Climate Corps members would engage in invasive species monitoring and management, train the general public to carry out these activities as citizen scientists, build upon the invasive species inventory, and grow the network of volunteers in the field.

10. Shoreline Monitoring & Stabilization

Members would expand current shoreline monitoring and stabilizing projects, including living shoreline stabilization, green infrastructure, culvert monitoring and repair, and road vulnerability assessments.

11. Green Schools

In collaboration with K-12 schools, Climate Corps members would lead groups of students in school-based sustainability initiatives that they would then bring into the greater community.

Recommendation 5: The Maine Climate Corps be created in statute as an amendment to the Maine Commission for Community Service (Volunteer Maine) statute in order to ensure the purpose, structure, standards, and responsibility for coordination are clearly established.

Codifying these aspects of a Maine Climate Corps will address the need to keep the mission and responsibilities focused. It also will authorize the Commission to represent Maine in the myriad of national nonprofit and governmental policy and regulatory work groups related to Civilian Climate Corps – their standards, funding, branding, regulations, recruitment, and more.

The Presidential Executive Order on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad signed on January 27, 2021, that directed federal agencies to develop a strategy for creating a Civilian Climate Corps was followed by Senate and House introduction of bills to establish the Corps. The bipartisan Civilian Climate Corps Act has been endorsed by the Corps Network, Voices for National Service, Service Year Alliance, National Wildlife Federation, and the National Audubon Society, as well as others, because it makes some significant updates to AmeriCorps, the program through which the Civilian Climate Corps would operate. Many of those changes -- including priorities for project action and for aid to both disadvantaged and indigenous communities, increasing the living allowance to the equivalent of \$15/hour, doubling the value of the education award, setting the federal contribution per FTE as a percent of the living allowance so all benefits and taxes are covered -- were incorporated into the budget reconciliation bill pending in Congress.

Recommendation 6: A Climate Corps Coordinator at Volunteer Maine provide State leadership.

Establish and fund the position of Climate Corps Coordinator at the Commission. Maine Climate Corps programs need a state leader who will:

- guide development and implementation of community programs;

- ensure the standards for being a Climate Corps program are met by individual programs;
- connect program leaders to technical assistance and training for Service Corps or, if the issue is specific to a climate corps program, provide the technical assistance or training;
- participate in national governmental and nonprofit Climate Corps development and policy setting groups;
- identify opportunities for Maine programs to benefit from regional or national collaborations and arrange for Maine participation;
- coordinate policy and plans for Maine Climate Corps with the Maine Climate Council;
- ensure Climate Corps programs collaborate with other Service Corps in Maine for the benefit of members, communities, and program leadership;
- develop and present for Commission consideration, any policies and procedures related to grant making, grant administration, or program requirements that may be unique to Climate Corps programs;
- work with Commission staff and board leadership on setting program goals, evaluating performance, planning development, and staying informed of national and state policies and priorities;
- prepare funding applications for relevant federal or state grants and administer funds in accordance with requirements.

Recommendation 7: Direct state agencies to coordinate climate-related funding for projects so that the human resources Climate Corps brings to bear can be paired with federal project financial resources to maximize scale and scope of those funds.

Service Corps provide human resources to get projects done locally. For the past 30 years, organizations with Service Corps operating grants have provided as match or grantee share, the local program leadership (administrative, supervisory, and technical), plus the supplies, materials, facility, and other resources needed to implement projects. Beginning in 2011, the AmeriCorps program authorized use of other federal agencies' funds as grantee share if the other awarding federal agency agreed with the use. The goal of all the federal agencies involved has been to maximize the impact of funding at the community level.

At the federal level, there already is a Civilian Climate Corps interagency coordinating committee led by the Department of Agriculture with membership including AmeriCorps. The involved agencies and departments (Interior, Housing and Urban Development, Energy, etc.) are considering what actions might be needed to ensure funding comes together locally in a timeframe and with compatible regulations, applications, and requirements that will make the opportunities accessible, equitable, and impactful.

With the funding for climate change response coming to states through multiple federal channels, state coordination will be essential to ensure any potential challenges to linking Climate Corps members' efforts with grants or funding to community organizations are overcome.

Recommendation 8: Leverage the federal Climate Corps resources that will flow through AmeriCorps by appropriating state funding for corps programs' leadership (a local match expense) and supporting the state corps, Maine Service Fellows, so it can help rural communities do the essential planning and preparation for successful Climate Corps action.

One aspect of the research for this report was a survey of organizations about their financial ability to support a full Climate Corps program. 75% of respondents to the Potential Climate Corps Budget Survey indicated the budget item they could not cover from known resources was the program leadership. Typically, a Corps needs at least 1 FTE full-time leader. Using the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics table on Maine occupational employment and wages, the median total annual wage and benefits for 1 FTE community service manager would be \$81,310. The appropriation would guarantee a level of stable

leadership for the Corps members and programs while helping to meet required local match for federal funds.

	<i>SFY 2023</i>	<i>SFY 2024</i>
Grants for 5 Climate Corps program leadership	\$406,550	\$418,746
Grants for 2 additional Climate Corps programs' leadership	\$ 0	\$167,499

The Maine Service Fellows, a non-federal corps program responsive solely to Maine needs, was established in the first session of the 130th Maine legislature as an amendment to the Commission's statute. One of the purposes of the program is to provide the most rural and underserved communities in the State a resource to address critical health and human, public safety, educational, and environmental needs. The priorities for action were first, COVID-19 recovery, and then issues that significantly overlap with local climate change impacts.

These Maine communities share much in common with those discussed in the Spring 2021 Stanford Social Innovation Review article about rural communities that did not access COVID-19 economic relief for which they qualified. Researchers found that these communities were both economically disadvantaged and disadvantaged by the absence of community agencies and local leaders with the training and skills to communicate needs through applications. It can be expected that the same will happen when faced with the complexity of responding to climate change impacts.

Although \$500,000 in public funds was authorized for Maine Service Fellows, no source of funding was specified, so no operating funds have been directed to the program. It is recommended that a specific source be identified in SFY2023 and 2024 for half of the authorized funds (\$250,000) to support Maine Service Fellows who would help the targeted communities set priorities, connect with appropriate Climate Corps programming, and do the planning needed to host one or more Climate Corps members.



Volunteer Maine

Maine Commission for Community Service

www.VolunteerMaine.gov

207.624.7792

service.commission@maine.gov

Our Core Values

Community-driven and government-supported initiatives



Empowering beneficiaries to implement solutions, especially those underrepresented and/or under resourced

Civic identity and common purpose

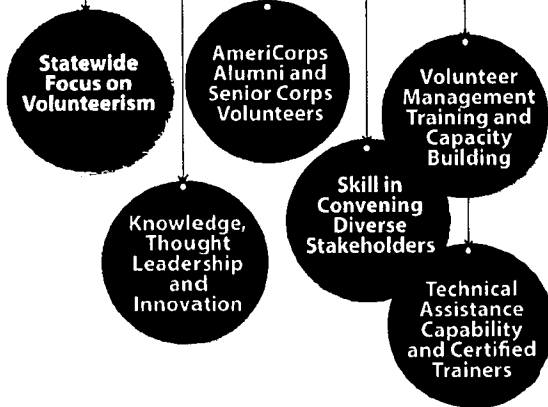


Personal and civic responsibility



Service solutions for community problems

Our Assets



Our Resources



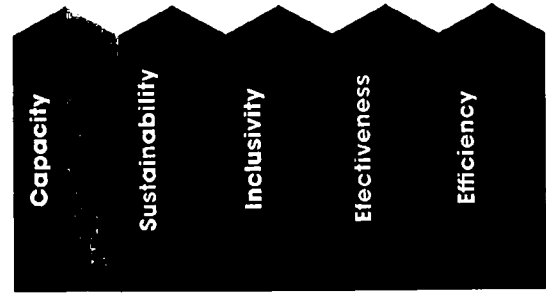
In-Kind Donations & Services



State Funding

Our Impact

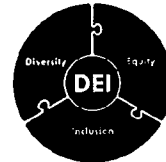
Working to Impact Maine's Volunteer Sector



We Serve



Managers of Volunteers



Organizations serving marginalized and disadvantaged communities



AmeriCorps
Maine Grantees



Organizations Seeking to Engage Volunteers



Agencies Seeking to Develop Service Programs

How We Serve



Promote service as a strategy.



Provide training and technical assistance to volunteer programs & staff.



Make, administer, and evaluate volunteer program grants.



Foster high quality volunteer management practices.



Raising awareness of volunteer sector issues, especially those affecting socially marginalized and/or historically disadvantaged communities.



Volunteer Maine
Maine Commission for Community Service

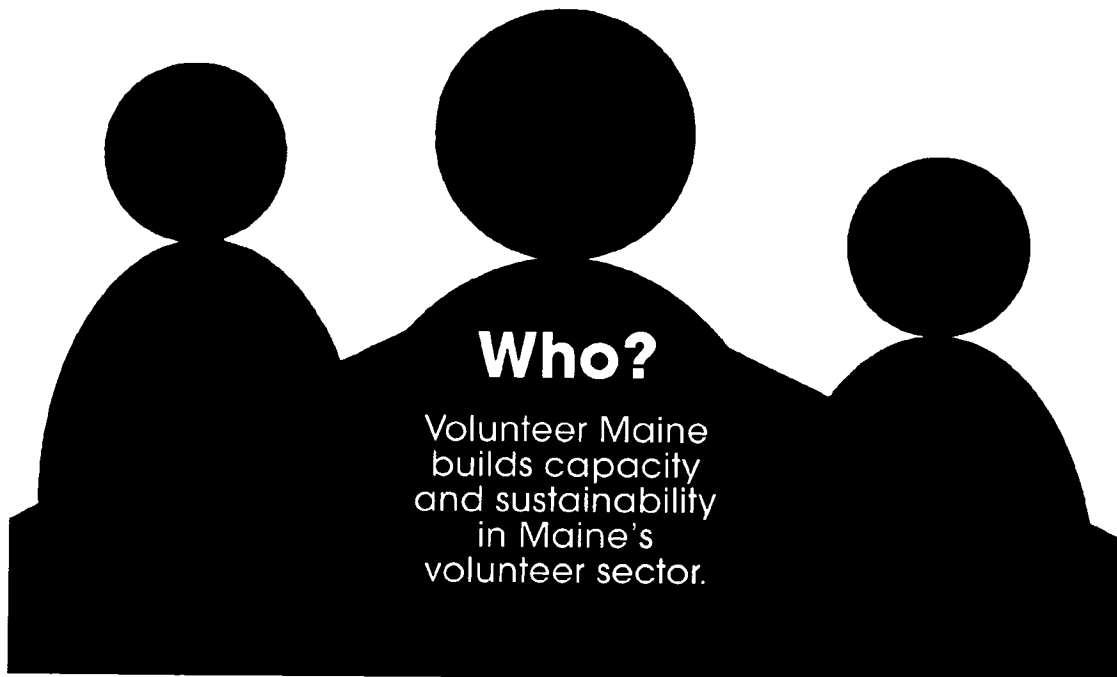
The Commission Serves:

Managers of volunteers

Maine National
Service grantees

Organizations seeking to
engage volunteers

Agencies seeking to develop
service programs



Who?

Volunteer Maine
builds capacity
and sustainability
in Maine's
volunteer sector.

STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES



Serve as Maine's center of excellence on volunteer service.



Provide consultation and training on volunteer engagement



Identify key issues impacting Maine's volunteer sector and Commission grantees



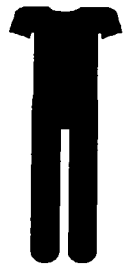
Provide information and data on the status of Maine's volunteer sector, civic health, and civic engagement



Cultivate young volunteer and service leaders.



Leverage the impact of volunteer service to meet state need to attract and retain talented young adults.



Use the Commission as a public voice for the volunteer sector.

Increase recognition, visibility and respect for volunteer efforts.



Promote understanding of connections between volunteering, civic engagement, economic and community success.



Foster a culture of service and civic engagement.

CONTACT:

www.VolunteerMaine.gov

service.commission@maine.gov

207.624.7792