



*Impact and Involvement:
Strengthening Communities, Building Leadership*

Maine Community Foundation
Strategic Plan 2010 – 2012

August 2009

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INTRODUCTION

In September 2007 the Maine Community Foundation’s Board of Directors adopted a five-year strategic plan that was predicated on significant growth in assets and programmatic impact. The plan proposed to “align our resources, increase our networks, share our knowledge, and expand organizational capacity, all of these efforts aimed at increasing the impact of our work.”

These aspirations continue to guide our new plan, even as financial projections have required us to rethink our priorities and review our resources, human and otherwise. *Impact and Involvement: Strengthening Communities, Building Leadership* provides strategic direction for the Maine Community Foundation in the context of these dramatically changed economic times.

The plan introduces our new president’s vision of a more prominent role for nonprofits as foundation partners and greater emphasis on our leadership. It also reaffirms our commitment to promote higher education, civic engagement, environmental stewardship, and community economic development as paths to improving the overall quality of life in Maine.

Impact and Involvement also highlights the major role the foundation can play in leveraging philanthropy on behalf of public policy issues statewide. Key to fulfilling this and all our roles is our continued emphasis on building strong relationships with current and future donors

In spite of economic volatility, the foundation’s long-term future remains bright. Our growing networks and donor community are deeply committed. Our excellent reputation continues to reflect high-quality programs and grantmaking, outstanding donor service, and the integrity of our asset stewardship program. By exercising effective leadership, the Maine Community Foundation will preserve and strengthen its position in the philanthropic community locally, regionally, and nationally.

Anne O. Jackson
Board Chair

Meredith H. Jones
President and CEO

VISION, MISSION, and VALUES

VISION

The Maine Community Foundation will be a philanthropic leader in building sustainable and vibrant communities for all Maine people.

MISSION

To strengthen Maine by working in partnership with donors and community groups. We accomplish our mission by:

- Providing leadership and support to address community issues
- Connecting donors to organizations and programs they care about
- Building, stewarding, and leveraging philanthropic resources

VALUES

- Trust, accountability, integrity and objectivity
- Openness, inclusiveness and representation of Maine's diverse communities
- Non-partisan convener
- Learning and innovation
- Community strengths, encouraging local leadership and supporting civic engagement
- Respect
- The strength, breadth and responsibility of being a statewide organization

ASSUMPTIONS

- Philanthropic leadership: We have a unique role in promoting philanthropy in Maine and providing philanthropic leadership to strengthen Maine communities
- Community-building: Our traditional framework for grantmaking capitalizes on community strengths and on helping individuals and organizations gain skills and tools for meaningful levels of civic engagement and leadership. We will continue to rely on these tenets as program and grantmaking strategies.
- County and regional work: We have integrated county committees, networks, and funds with our overall plans and strategies, and this commitment remains strong.
- Stewardship and financial accountability: We are committed to high quality donor service and to financial transparency and accountability, internally and externally.
- Grantmaking: We will be an effective, responsive, efficient, and innovative grantmaking organization.
- Primary audiences: Our work will focus on nonprofit organizations, policymakers and community leaders, donor advisors, funders and philanthropists, and internal networks of board members, staff, county advisors, and other volunteers.
- Communications: Communications will be innovative and effective; aligned with strategies and primary audiences; and supported by technology and other resources.
- Diversity and inclusiveness will remain foremost in business, program, and other decisions and deliberations.
- Responding to community needs: We will continue to solicit feedback and monitor trends and data to maximize our awareness of the issues and needs of Maine communities and increase our effectiveness.
- Role of staff, board directors, and advisors: Every staff, board, and county committee member plays a role in promoting the mission of the foundation. We will provide the information, skills, and tools to be effective.
- Staffing: The majority of the strategies and actions outlined in this plan are based on a reduced number of staff, no net additional staff in the next 36 months, a low rate of staff turnover, and a potential reallocation of existing staff to ensure that core activities continue to be conducted with a high degree of customer satisfaction and accuracy. The management team will evaluate changing needs in response to changing circumstances while striving to maintain a positive and productive work environment.
- Economy: This plan assumes neither significant declines nor advances in the market and that a weak economy will continue and only a very modest upturn beginning in 2010.

Goal I

Lead Maine's philanthropic sector to strengthen Maine communities

Strategies and Select Activities

- A. Partner with the Maine Philanthropy Center and others to promote philanthropy in Maine
 - 1. Develop plans to enhance awareness of the importance of philanthropy among legislators and other opinion leaders; involve board members and county committees
 - 2. Assist in the release and use of Maine Rural Partners' Wealth Transfer Study to encourage endowment building
- B. Leverage federal and other funding opportunities that will strengthen Maine communities.
- C. Explore potential roles for the foundation on statewide public policy issues that affect communities of Maine.
 - 1. Define the process to determine MaineCF's best role
 - 2. Update strategic plan to reflect outcomes, as appropriate

Goal II

Maximize the impact of philanthropy to foster sustainable and vibrant communities

Strategies and Select Activities

- A. Provide programmatic leadership for the following strategic priorities:
 - 1. Education
 - a. Leverage funding to support the Maine Compact for Higher Education, with particular emphasis on the Employer Initiative administered by Maine Development Foundation
 - b. Identify and pursue other efforts that support the goals of the Compact, such as non-traditional scholarships
 - c. Partner with organizations working to lower barriers to post-secondary training (through MaineCF's NPO Effectiveness program)
 - 2. Environmental Stewardship
 - a. Increase and evaluate collaborative grantmaking among donor advisors and other funders through the Environmental Funders Network
 - b. Identify, develop, and present programs and networking opportunities for donors and funders
 - 3. Civic Engagement
 - a. Secure matching funding for implementation phase of EncoreME, a training program for civic-minded older Mainers that is managed by the UM Center on Aging.
 - b. Launch EncoreME program in partnership with UM Center on Aging
 - 4. Community Economic Development
 - a. Leverage funding to support the work of Maine Farmland Trust and other efforts in sustainable agriculture, as appropriate
 - b. Leverage funding and provide programmatic support for historic preservation efforts in partnership with Maine Preservation and Maine Historic Preservation Commission

B. Help nonprofits increase their effectiveness and adapt to the economic challenges.

1. Partner with funders and organizations such as the Institute for Civic Leadership, United Ways, Maine Association of Nonprofits, and others to develop, fund, and implement new programs and services for the nonprofit sector, such as the Viability Clinics initiated in 2009
2. Modify MaineCF's role in the Program for Nonprofit Effectiveness to effectively build on the strengths of MaineCF and Common Good Ventures
3. Building on the results of survey and other data, implement grant modifications that better support the needs of nonprofit organizations

C. Engage networks of philanthropists, nonprofit organizations, and business, government, and community leaders.

1. Acquire, manage, and convey knowledge in areas of strategic priority
2. Communicate effectively about programs and grantmaking activities
3. Conduct programs and briefings that build and strengthen our networks and learning opportunities

Goal III

Build charitable resources to strengthen Maine communities

Strategies and Select Activities

A. Involve staff, board, and county/regional advisors in advancement efforts

1. Develop and implement an updated three-year advancement plan, capitalizing on the most promising strategies
2. Conduct special outreach during the five-year anniversary of each county or regional fund
3. Coach board members and county advisors about fund types and outreach strategies for prospective donors, institutional prospects, and professional advisors
4. Implement system for tracking volunteer outreach efforts
5. Confirm the fund types to target for outreach activities, (e.g. discretionary, scholarships, etc.), using data from the cost-revenue study.

B. Intensify outreach to professional advisors

1. Involve county advisors and board members to further build networks
2. Upgrade and maintain web-based resources
3. Present continuing education programs throughout the state

C. Build relationships, share knowledge, and deliver outstanding donor service

1. Implement tiered level of services for donors
2. Introduce family philanthropy concepts and strategies to donors and successor advisors
3. Promote charter fund services (\$3M+) to prospective donors, private foundation trustees and staff, nonprofit organizations, and targeted professional advisors
4. Increase dialogue with select current donor advisors regarding strategic priorities

- D. Increase planned and unique charitable gifts from current and prospective donors
 - 1. Execute strengthened program for gifts of real estate and interests in business entities including marketing and analysis of progress and resources commitment
 - 2. Discuss planned giving options and services with select donors

Goal IV

Ensure that the high quality of MaineCF’s core responsibilities is sustained and its organizational model accommodates change and maximizes effectiveness.

Strategies and Select Activities

- A. Update business model
 - 1. Conduct cost-revenue study
 - 2. Adapt plans that reflect the results
 - 3. Conduct a risk assessment and develop responses as needed
 - 4. Research feasibility of new revenue generating strategies
- B. Ensure that there is a strong and appropriate governance structure
 - 1. Create a model that links governance, board, county committees, and staffing
 - 2. Schedule regular opportunities for board assessment and self-assessment
 - 3. Cultivate future board, committee, and county committee leadership
- C. Maximize internal learning and efficiencies
 - 1. Determine ways and needed resources to improve information systems to document grant counts, degree of donor engagement, funds leveraged, and other indicators and measures
- D. Use technology to support strategies and activities
 - 1. Increase the use of technology to connect donors, volunteers, and nonprofit partners, such as interactive blogs, a secure web site for grant reviewers to access proposals, online grant applications for grant seekers, and real-time reports for management and other purposes.
 - 2. Initiate secure on-line donor advisor access to fund information and other material
- E. Evaluate MaineCF physical locations and facilities in light of current economic circumstances, history, constituent relations, and strategic aspirations.

RISKS

1. Organizations serving as key partners are unable to accomplish agreed upon work
Response: Relationships are monitored and adjustments made as needed to advance strategic plan priorities.
2. A significant economic downturn leads to decreased charitable giving.
Response: Income and expenses are closely monitored and adjusted as required.
3. Investment markets produce lower than expected returns on investments.
Response: Investment Committee actively reviews our asset allocation to achieve growth objectives and stability in investment returns. To absorb a potential prolonged slump in the investment markets, operating revenue is based on conservative return projections.
5. Assets do not meet revenue requirements.
Response: Projected staff, new hires, and other expenses have been reduced or eliminated. There are contingency plans at each \$10M tier of assets, both positive and negative.
6. Legislation regarding philanthropy leads to a decrease in giving.
Response: We are alert to changes in gift and tax incentives for charitable giving through membership in the Council on Foundations (COF), our own Planned Giving Design Center legislative alerts, and other professional activities. A flexible business design allows us to respond to new federal and state guidelines.
7. Because of greater community need, there is a significant increase in grantmaking resulting in decreased assets and greater demand on staff.
Response: We will closely monitor indicators and metrics, as well as seeking and closely listening to feedback from staff.
8. Donors and other key constituents perceive our work to be outside the scope of our mission, which in turn leads to declining support.
Response: We will communicate about the ways in which our activities are linked to our mission and consider modifications to activities that result in donor disaffection.
9. Turnover of key staff members makes it difficult to carry out parts of the plan.
Response: Our human resources philosophy and compensation program recognize and emphasize the importance of staff. Our values contribute to staff retention. We will continue to nurture a healthy productive workplace. Our team approach provides continuity on project work, as well as depth of staffing and leadership.
10. MaineCF's positive reputation is tarnished in the marketplace.
Response: We will first assess the issue and then respond appropriately, using our networks and supporters as advocates on our behalf.