

# NAVIGATING ROUGH SEAS

## A Community Discussion with Non-Profits on Program Sustainability



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January 14, 2009  
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### Web Links:

*20 Things Non-Profits Can Do to Decrease Expenses*

*20 Things Non-Profits Can Do to Increase Revenues*

*Public Policy Information-MANP Website*

*Maine Can Do Better Website*

*Feedback Highlights*

*Attendee List is Available Upon Request*

Hosted by  
United Way of Eastern Maine



1. Create a common and clear understanding of the effects of the current economic climate, including state and federal budget cuts. Consider what we know to be fact vs. what we still need to find out.
2. Provide a forum for discussion of sustainability and potential community impact. What will this mean to our programs, our clients, our communities?
3. Provide an opportunity for potential action and collaborations, planning and other activities. Build relationships, generate ideas for meeting the impending challenges, and identify action steps.

## **OBJECTIVES**

# Speaker's Notes

**Dennis Marble**, Executive Director, Bangor Area Homeless Shelter

Sharing his view of the local perspective, Dennis noted that in times of real trouble, when resources are being outpaced by demand and fear is reaching into more families, it is important to remember that there is also opportunity - to work together and improve our systems. Posing theoretical questions, Dennis reminded us of the importance of a clear focus, especially in such areas as public policy.

**Peter Taylor**, Director of Community Investment, Maine Community Foundation

Peter's perspective took our conversation to a statewide view, as he shared some of the efforts taking place to assist nonprofits with meeting the challenges facing so many organizations. Peter noted that not all nonprofits would find the right answer - in the same strategy; some nonprofits will close, others will merge, others will reorganize and be stronger. Peter reminded us of the excellent support organizations such as MANP, ICL and Common Good Ventures.

**Brenda Peluso**, Director of Public Policy, Maine Association of Nonprofits

Brenda provided information and advice on the need for nonprofits to raise their voice! Brenda reminded attendees that nonprofits can and should engage in lobbying and mission advocacy and reassured everyone that the rules are easy to learn (see links for website), and that Mission advocacy can and should be integrated into your mission work – creating an even greater impact toward achieving the mission of your nonprofit organization.

**Chris Hastedt**, Maine Equal Justice Partners

Chris discussed the significant fiscal challenges facing our State and potential aid from the federal stimulus package and shared important information on the State's spending rate, noting that *state* spending has NOT outpaced statewide growth in personal income; in the last five years overall state spending has grown at an average annual rate of 2.9%, or very close to the underlying rate of inflation. This information was posed against the revenue side of the budget ledger; an area that many economists believe requires new strategies. Chris encouraged a sense of community, where we all make a contribution in a fair and meaningful way (see link for recommended website).

Funding sources are drying up for all  
Giving and corporate sponsorship are down  
Long wait for services  
More/new people in need of services  
Public doesn't understand the role of non-  
profits  
There will be additional cuts to come  
Public is demoralized/fearful  
Layoffs are happening  
Health care needs revamping  
We must collaborate  
Local non-profits are more effective than  
government  
We must cut non-essential services  
Demand for services will rise  
Larger case loads= burnout  
Harder to recruit volunteers  
Moving toward part time with cuts in salaries  
We will have to restructure programs/services  
Senior's programs facing challenges  
Baby boom generation looming

Price increases affect everyone  
MaineCare cuts  
Donors focusing on fewer charities  
PNMT standardization of rates coming  
Food pantries under-stocked  
Older workers can't afford to leave the work-force  
When people don't eat, it leads to poor health and learning  
ability and increased violence and homelessness  
People are good with a fair opportunity  
Competition for resources  
We are not helpless  
If we work together we are more successful  
We live in a compassionate/generous community  
Disparity exists in reimbursement between  
urban and rural locations  
Some costs are beyond our control  
Middle class is shrinking

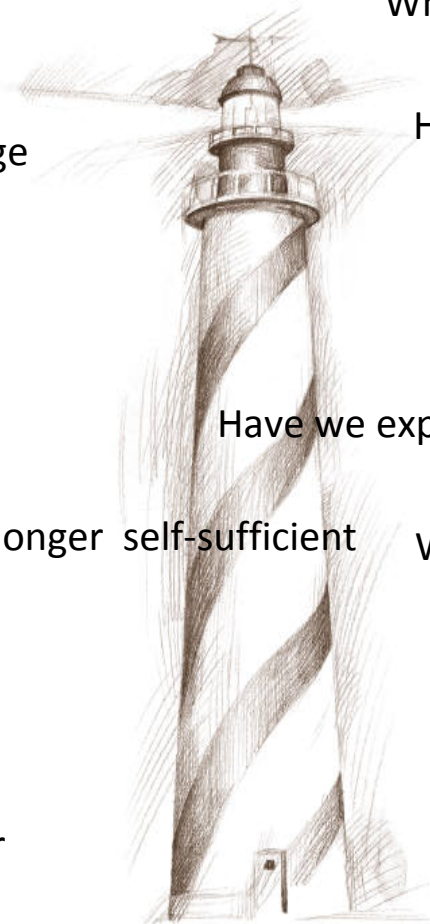
## Round Table Discussions What Do We Know?



# Round Table Discussions

## What Do We Still Need To Learn?

Impact of school consolidations  
Effect of substance abuse cuts  
Overall fall out from all cuts and shrinkage  
How to self-evaluate our work  
Why is there more demand for services  
What should be the role of UWEM  
Who will facilitate collaborations  
What happens when a community is no longer self-sufficient  
Learn more about other agencies  
Better data on existing services  
Is there really “excess capacity”  
How to avoid competing with each other  
State priorities



What services are duplicated  
Coming budget cuts  
How to attract “social venture capital”  
Which agencies are struggling/folding  
Are redundancies correctable  
How to retain grassroots values and resources as we regionalize  
Where new dollars will come from  
The risks of change  
Intent of state consolidation plans  
Have we explored volunteer opportunities fully  
Will I have a job  
Where will the clients go if we close  
How/who will educate the public  
Who will be our collective voice  
How to determine what is vital  
Innovative approaches

# Round Table Discussions

## What needs to happen to continue to meet the needs of clients and community?

- Schedule regular meetings with local legislators
- Hold major donor forums on regular basis
- Broaden staff skills -but cut training costs
- Hold board and management retreats
- Revamp job descriptions
- Provide a central access for clients (network system)
- Data driven “show rates”, evaluate, adjust accordingly
- Maximize technology access for staff and clients
- Minimize travel
- Reduce staff through attrition
- Be supportive of overstretched staff
- Embrace staff /leadership risk taking
- Review mission- attend to prevention
- Dollars shape programs through narrowing of outcomes



- Develop a common advocacy platform
- Use PR related to development
- Find ways to get the message across – i.e. put a face on the need
- Hold a retreat with facilitation –
- Implement a 5 year plan
- Inner agency restructure- create jobs that equal ownership
- Streamline jobs and resources- improve productivity
- Find creative fundraising ideas
- Find ways to collaborate and share resources
- Find duplication of services –
- Even if at the expense of an organization
- Educate community about what nonprofits are doing to meet needs
- Educate community on gaps and how or where they can help
- Build community support

Develop healthy, informed boards  
Attract new board members  
Implement energy conservation measures  
Establish a strategic plan  
Diversify income e.g., contract services, income programs like training/rehabilitation  
Review insurance costs  
Charge nominal fees  
Reduce grant amounts  
Maximize talents/time of all volunteers  
Utilize a community assessment  
Provide a peer review of programs  
Utilize more webinars and teleconferencing  
Use MPA and MAIN links to broaden scope  
Use Opportunity Maine resources



Create a way for agencies to reach out - well before they fold  
Identify what we should **not** be doing  
Look at in-kind donations  
Identify collaborative grant applications  
Decrease dependence on state funding  
Increase donor gifts  
Change eligibility levels  
Use university resources: interns, workshops, research  
Encourage youth volunteerism  
Support tax credits for volunteers  
Research shared positions e.g., doing payroll full-time for 4-5 agencies  
Establish a better web presence for outreach  
Identify no-cost media coverage  
Provide less tangible rewards for staff- laughter, gift certificates  
Regionalize services

## **Round Table Discussions**

# **What needs to happen to continue to meet the needs of clients and community?**

**Action Team:**  
**“One Voice”**

**Action Team Contact:**  
Francine Stark of Spruce Run  
[fstark@sprucerun.net](mailto:fstark@sprucerun.net)

**Action Team Members:**  
Pat Kimball  
[PKimball@wellspringa.org](mailto:PKimball@wellspringa.org)  
Dennis Marble  
[bahs@gwi.net](mailto:bahs@gwi.net)  
Bob Mathien  
[mmhc@mmhc.us](mailto:mmhc@mmhc.us)  
Jane Searles  
[searles@maine.edu](mailto:searles@maine.edu)  
Lynn Ellis  
[lynn.ellis@mainedop.org](mailto:lynn.ellis@mainedop.org)  
Shelby D. Wright  
[sdwright@ttds.net](mailto:sdwright@ttds.net)  
Joyce Schelling  
[jkschelling@gmail.com](mailto:jkschelling@gmail.com)  
Bonnie Swartz  
[bswartz@ccmaine.org](mailto:bswartz@ccmaine.org)  
Stephanie Cotsirilos  
[sgcots@aol.com](mailto:sgcots@aol.com)  
Tracy Cooley  
[tcooley@mainekids.kin.org](mailto:tcooley@mainekids.kin.org)  
Mike Tapper  
[mike@pathwaywesleyan.com](mailto:mike@pathwaywesleyan.com)  
Eileen McAvoy  
[emcavoy@penquis.org](mailto:emcavoy@penquis.org)

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**Action Team:**

**“Back Office Efficiency”**

**Action Team Contact:**  
Sheila Ashburn of Wellspring.  
[sashburn@wellspringa.org](mailto:sashburn@wellspringa.org)

**Action Team Members:**  
Susan Faloon [sfaloon@bhe.com](mailto:sfaloon@bhe.com)  
Colleen Adams [colleen@techmaine.org](mailto:colleen@techmaine.org)



**Action Team:**

Volunteerism

No Formal Team Established, however, Ben Haskell from NESCOM and Sara Yasner discussed some informal ideas – more to come.

United Way of Eastern Maine

# Action Teams

**Action Team:**

**“Diversification of Revenue  
Grant writing partnerships”**

**Action Team Contact:**  
Mary Poulin of the Warren Center  
[mpoulin@warrencenter.org](mailto:mpoulin@warrencenter.org)

**Action Team Members:**  
Val Souda  
[vsouda@eaaa.org](mailto:vsouda@eaaa.org)  
Pam Jacobson  
[pjacobson@charlottewhite.org](mailto:pjacobson@charlottewhite.org)  
Tracey Cousineau  
[tcousinear@hanfqhc.org](mailto:tcousinear@hanfqhc.org)  
Peggy Day  
[pegday@gwi.net](mailto:pegday@gwi.net)  
Diane Vatne  
[diane.vatne@mail.otsd.org](mailto:diane.vatne@mail.otsd.org)

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# Conference Feedback



1. Today's conference created a common and clear understanding of the effects of the current over-all economic climate as it relates to continuing to meet community needs.

37% Strongly Agree 63% Agree 0% Disagree

2. In working toward the goal of continuing to meet the needs of clients and community members, today's conference provided an effective forum for discussion.

53% Strongly Agree 47% Agree 0% Disagree

3. Today's conference allowed participants to share their opinions, concerns and ideas.

68% Strongly Agree 32% Agree 0% Disagree

4. My voice was heard today.

32% Strongly Agree 68% Agree 0% Disagree

5. I believe the ideas and action steps created today are a positive start toward making a difference in my organization..

47% Strongly Agree 52% Agree 1% Disagree

6. I believe the ideas and action steps created today are a positive start toward meeting the challenges in our community.

53% Strongly Agree 47% Agree 0% Disagree

7. In addition to participants meeting at a future time to begin work on the action steps, what else can United Way and/or community organizations be doing to ensure community needs are met? *(use other side if necessary)*

*(1) Common Web-based Grant System; (2) Continue to support each other; (3) Encourage more conversations like this; (4) UWEM to be the organizational 'hub' to keep this going; (5) Bring in other stakeholders; (6)*

8. Should a similar conference be offered in other communities/counties? **Yes** **No**  
84% Responded "YES" Remainder did not respond

If yes, where? **Most Common: Ellsworth, Machias, Dover-Foxcroft, and Millinocket**

9. Other Comments or suggestions: *(use other side if necessary)*

Good Opening Dialogue

Send a list of participants to all who attend

Send a list of all non-profits

Capture ideas from today and report out

Great start to community work – thank you.

Great Job!

## Additional Information is just a LINK away . . .

- **Ways to Cut Expenses:** [http://www.fieldstonealliance.org/client/tools\\_you\\_can\\_use/01-22-09\\_cost\\_cutting\\_ideas.cfm?disccode=TOOL01220920](http://www.fieldstonealliance.org/client/tools_you_can_use/01-22-09_cost_cutting_ideas.cfm?disccode=TOOL01220920) Ways to cut Expenses
- **Ways to Increase Funding:** [http://www.fieldstonealliance.org/client/tools\\_you\\_can\\_use/12-16-08\\_emergency\\_funding.cfm](http://www.fieldstonealliance.org/client/tools_you_can_use/12-16-08_emergency_funding.cfm)
- **Maine Association of Nonprofits on Public Policy:** [www.nonprofitmaine.org/advocacy.asp](http://www.nonprofitmaine.org/advocacy.asp)
- **Maine Can Do Better:** [www.mainecandobetter.org](http://www.mainecandobetter.org)

Please note that the **conference attendee** list may be requested by emailing :

[Karent@unitedwayem.org](mailto:Karent@unitedwayem.org)

Thank you to all who participated. We look forward to hearing and participating in the action teams established. United Way is pleased to continue to share information on any and all of the efforts. Please contact any of the Community Impact staff for assistance

Thank you to the speakers for sharing your knowledge, expertise and time, it provided an excellent start to the important conversations to follow.

A very special thank you to **Kathy Hunt of Starboard Leadership**  
Her excellent facilitation skills provided the perfect light to keep us on our path!

