

# Retooling State Government in an Era of Loose Networks: An Invitation to Collaborate

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# Our Challenge

How do we develop systems to provide technical assistance and incentives in a way that creates a supportive framework rather than duplicating or suppressing the work of other organizations?



Town and state leaders in Norway, Maine

# MOCA's Mission

- Make it easier for communities to find and make use of state planning and resilience resources
- Improve and align state programs so that they better achieve the intended results
- Partner with other organizations in ways that foster success for communities

“The Maine Office of Community Affairs is established as an agency in the executive branch to **foster communications and partnerships between the State and communities in this State.** The office shall engage with municipalities, tribal governments and regional councils to **provide coordinated and efficient planning, technical assistance and financial support** to better plan for challenges, pursue solutions and create stronger, more resilient communities.”

# MOCA Programs

## Proposed to be Created

- State Resilience Office (NOAA funded)
- Flood Ready Maine (in State Resilience Office)

## Existing, proposed to move

- [Housing Opportunity Program](#) (DECD)
- [Municipal Planning Assistance Program](#) (DACF)
- [Community Resilience Partnership](#) (GOPIF)
- [Maine Floodplain Management Program](#) (DACF)
- [Maine Coastal Program](#) (DMR)
- [Volunteer Maine](#) (DOE)
- [MUBEC/ Code Enforcement](#) (Fire Marshal)

State Resilience Office and the Flood Ready Maine program: Proposed in LD 1

Moves of existing programs: Biennial Budget, part D

# Opportunities

By coordinating programs and improving our offerings, we can:

- Provide a one-stop shop for communities
- Align incentives and policies to achieve more consistent results
- Reduce administrative burden on communities and service providers

## Sample Initiatives that we are exploring:

Searchable database to bring grant opportunities together in one place

Collaborations with other agencies to provide multi-agency pre-application input

Combine grant programs with a common application form

Work with regional organizations and nonprofits to bring service delivery closer to the community

Referral service to provide a “warm handoff” to get community officials and volunteers to the right person the first time

Create technical assistance materials to address the housing crisis and other key municipal needs

# Simplify Programs



## Example: Combine Grants

- NY and UT have combined grants
- One application, multiple pots of \$
- Reduces burden on communities
- How widely can we do this here?
- Is there a way to partner outside of government?

## Example: Community Resilience Workbook as Searchable Portal

- Workbook was created by a network
- Meets the user where they are
- Curated links to gov't and NGO resources
- Not just a list –guides user based on issue
- How do we keep this fresh?

# Align Policy



## Example: Subdivision

- Different definitions and standards across state programs
- Rules are outdated
- Affects housing financing and construction, quality of place, and impacts on natural lands
- Innovative practices are being promoted by non -gov't groups
- Grant programs may say nothing about subdivisions, or they may have divergent approaches
- How do we get multiple agencies and NGOs on the same page?

# Warm Handoffs



## Example: Mobile Home Park Expansion

- Contacted by owner, need is for water and sewer infrastructure
- I could have suggested people he call
- Instead, I called around first –now how do I make that network information available to the whole group?

## Example: Comp Plan Assistance

- Towns generally need help, and there is a network of regional orgs and consultants.
- How can we structure our network so that there is a clear handoff pathway for assistance plus funding to go with it?



# Making the Network Visible

Not purely an analysis tool...

Not purely a directory...

Not purely a communications tool...

- What is it we are trying to build, exactly?
- Why is this so hard?
- Are there really that many actors in the space?
- Can we get a sense of what a subset of the network might look like?

# Example: Housing Opportunity Program

Encourages and supports the development of additional housing units, particularly housing units for low -and middle - income individuals and units targeted to community workforce housing needs.

## Services

- Technical assistance to municipalities to support housing development
- Funding to support ordinance development, housing master planning , and public engagement
- Research and information about opportunities to encourage housing development
- Creating statewide and regional housing goals





# How Did we Get Here? 50 -year Transition.

## 1970s

- Command and Control era
- Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, LURC formed
- Expectation was that government would act on the ground

## 2020s

- Government capacity not sufficient to provide direct service in many cases
- Expectation is that government will do only what others cannot
- Substantial service contracts, grant programs, network development

# Water Quality Example

## Pre-McKernan era (Governor 1987 -1995)

- Much of the lakes sampling and special studies done at DEP
- Limited NGO involvement

## Today

- Robust lakes organizations like Lake Stewards of Maine, Maine Lakes, Sebago Clean Waters, many others.
- Much of the sampling and science work done in the NGOs with state and private funding. Some data owned by DEP.



# Why Does This Feel Difficult?

- We have lots of NGOs in Maine (a good thing!)
- Recent infrastructure and resilience \$\$ have created more grants and TA opportunities
- We are not used to managing a network that encompasses so many nodes.

## According to the Maine Association of Nonprofits:

- Maine has 7,596 registered nonprofits
- Of those, 572 are private foundations and
- 7,014 are public charities
- Of the public charities, 2,520 are large enough that they must file tax returns
- Of those, 450 are in the categories environmental or community improvement. 450!!

From Adding Up Impact (MANP, 2025)

# Is This New? Yes, in Terms of Sheer Volume .

## MANP Statistics for “reporting charitable nonprofits”:

**2000:**

1,862 orgs, spending \$4.5b

**2022:**

2,685 orgs spending \$15.7b

Also consider the networks of:

- Consultants
- Municipal and county officials
- Academic and Extension professionals
- Development firms
- Federal Agencies
- Financial and Insurance Institutions
- Etc. etc.

Recent infrastructure and resilience \$\$  
have created more services

We are not used to managing a network  
that encompasses so many nodes.

OK, So It's the 2020s...

In this new world, what is government's ideal role?

MOCA affects the network –what is our intent?

What representation of the network will strengthen the nodes and help avoid duplication?

What representation of the network will foster the capacity to survive transitions?



Let's  
Collaborate!



MAINE OFFICE OF  
**Community  
Affairs**

# Thank you

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What suggestions do you have for resources or models to look at?
- Are there other projects looking at similar questions?
- What reactions do you have to the questions I raised?
- What forums would be the most efficient collaboration spaces, given limited time resources?