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## Volunteer Recruitment and Retention in Maine Performing Arts Organizations

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Volunteer Recruitment and Retention in Maine Performing Arts Organizations

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MAINE

LEADERSHIP STUDIES

BY

Adam P. Blais

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2017

FINAL APPROVAL FORM

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MAINE

MASTER IN LEADERSHIP STUDIES


May 8, 2017

We hereby recommend that the thesis of Adam P. Blais entitled *Volunteer Recruitment and Retention in Maine Performing Arts Organizations* be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master in Leadership Studies.

 Thesis Advisor (signature)

 Second Reader (signature)

Accepted

 Director (signature)

### **Abstract**

Performing arts organizations across the country heavily rely on a combination of ticket sales, individual and organizational contributions, and grant money to fund their operations. As a direct result, performing arts organizations have become increasingly reliant on volunteers to occupy both commonplace and significant operational and managerial roles within their establishments. Previous studies indicate that arts and cultural volunteers comprise approximately 1.6% of the 65.4 million individuals who annually donate their time and skills to organizations across the United States. This exploratory study intends to identify the performing arts volunteer in the state of Maine, and to define the incentives and hindrances that often encourage or discourage volunteer participation in professional performing arts organizations across the state. In an effort to identify trends specific to performing arts volunteers in the state of Maine, the results of this study were compared and contrasted with national volunteer data. The findings in this study may be used to assist professional performing arts organizations across the state in the development of effective methods in which to recruit and retain present and future volunteers.

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## Volunteer Recruitment and Retention in Maine Performing Arts Organizations

### **Introduction**

Each season, performing arts organizations across the country heavily rely on volunteers to fulfill tasks and responsibilities that are unable to be completed by paid employees. With an increased need for volunteer participants to occupy both commonplace and significant operational and managerial roles, many performing arts organizations have yet to succeed in identifying the appropriate methods and strategies with which to recruit and retain future and present volunteers. This exploratory study is intended to identify the performing arts volunteer within the state of Maine, and to distinguish the incentives and hindrances that either encourage or discourage volunteer participation in performing arts organizations across the state. The results of this study will be compared to national volunteer and performing arts research, and their similarities and discrepancies will be noted and discussed. Together, the previous and newfound research is intended to aid performing arts organizations in the creation and implementation of effective volunteer recruitment and retention strategies.

Performing arts organizations across the country heavily rely on a combination of ticket sales, individual and organizational contributions, and grant money to fund their operations (National Endowment for the Arts, 2008). As a direct result, volunteer labor has become vital to the success and existence of these organizations. In 2005, approximately 65.4 million individuals donated their time and skills to a variety of organizations across the United States. Only one million, or 1.6% of those individuals performed volunteer services within arts or cultural groups (Nichols, 2007). As the number of theatres and performing arts organizations continue to grow in both low and

high-populated states (National Endowment for the Arts, 2008), performing arts organizations across the country find themselves competing not only for grant money and ticket sales, but also for volunteer participation. By gaining a better understanding of the incentives and hindrances that either encourage or discourage volunteer participation, performing arts organizations may improve their ability to implement strategies and procedures that may effectively advance their volunteer recruitment and retention rates.

For this study, a volunteer is defined as “any individual who engages in purposeful activity that is not compelled, and the productive value of which is not captured by the volunteer” (Brown, 1999, p.18). This definition includes volunteers who receive a stipend in exchange for their time and services, as long as the stipend and rewards do not exceed the market value for services rendered (Brown, 1999). As this study focuses on a small cross section of volunteers, those who provide services directly to performing arts organizations within the state of Maine, it would be beneficial to define the parameters of a performing arts organization. For this study, a performing arts organization is defined as an establishment that produces or distributes a genre of art whose primary discipline is live performance. Performances may be produced or distributed by organizations representing the commercial, non-profit, or volunteer sectors, and may include any combination of theatre, dance, music, and opera (McCarthy, 2001).

This study does not intend to supply the reader with a concrete method for volunteer recruitment and retention. In the end, the study will provide users with information and statistics regarding volunteer composition, hindrances, benefits, and incentives that may then be utilized to develop volunteer recruitment and retention plans specific to the needs of the individual performing arts organization. While this study



focuses on a small cross section of volunteerism, its findings may speak for a wider population of volunteers and therefore may benefit a variety of volunteer driven organizations. Due to the varying organizational structures of performing arts organizations across the country, this study surveys volunteers who are 18 years of age or older, and who provide support services to professional performing arts organizations within the state of Maine.

## **Literature Review**

### **Volunteer Demographics**

According to a research note published by the National Endowment for the Arts, approximately 1.6 million Americans provided volunteer services to performing arts and cultural groups in the year 2005 (Nichols, 2007). Utilizing data from the 2005 Current Population Survey conducted by the United States Census Bureau, the study defined performing arts and cultural groups as being limited to local television and radio outfits, museums, zoos, aquariums, and performing arts organizations. Stating a limited number of arts and cultural volunteers by state, the United States Census Bureau divided the 1.6 million participants into regional divisions in order to improve accuracy. Their results were as follows: Northeast Region: 171,858 volunteers. Midwest Region: 267,876 volunteers. Southern Region: 276,225. Western Region: 300,450 volunteers. The regions were further subdivided into regional subdivisions, and once adjusted for population, the West North Central division of the Midwest region was reported to have had the highest concentration of arts volunteers with 54.8 volunteers per 10,000 people. The East South Central division of the Southern Region was reported to have had the lowest concentration of arts volunteers with 17.2 volunteers per 10,000, and the New England

division of the Northeast Region was reported to have had 45.8 volunteers per 10,000 people (Nichols, 2007).

On average, arts or cultural volunteers in the year 2005 were 7 to 12 years older than volunteers in other organizations (Nichols, 2007). The median age of arts or cultural volunteers was 51, and 23% of arts or cultural volunteers were 65 years of age or older. 87% of arts or cultural volunteers identified as white, and 60% identified as female. 62% of arts or cultural volunteers held a college degree, 49% were married, and 17% had children under the age of 18 (Nichols, 2007).

According to a recent Maine census, approximately 1.3 million individuals currently reside in the state of Maine (2012). Of those 1.3 million people, 22.2% are between the ages of 0 and 19, 24.9% are between the ages of 20 and 39, 30.6% are between the ages of 40 and 59, and 22.3% are 60 years of age or older. The United States Census Bureau (2012) reports that Maine's population of individuals over the age of 60 is experiencing rapid growth, and it is predicted that by the year 2030, 31.4% of Maine's population will be 60 years of age or older.

The racial and ethnic composition of the state of Maine is reported to be primarily white, with 94.5% of individuals under the age of 55 and 98.2% of individuals over the age of 55 identifying as white. 1.4% of individuals under the age of 55 and 0.3% of individuals over the age of 55 identify as Black/African American, and 3.3% of individuals under the age of 55 and 1.5% of individuals over the age 55 identify as Asian (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

### **Hindrances and Retention**

In 2006, 61.2 million individuals performed approximately 1.9 billion hours of volunteer work. The following year, 21.7 million, more than one third of those individuals, chose not to donate any more time to non-profit and or charitable organizations (Eisner, Grimm, Maynard, & Washburn, 2009). According to Eisner et al., this loss in volunteer time and services equates to approximately 38 billion dollars in annual lost labor (2009). The top five reasons cited by volunteers for leaving a particular organization included (1) the failure to match volunteer skills with assignments, (2) the failure to recognize volunteer contributions, (3) the inability to measure the value of volunteers, (4) the failure to train and invest in volunteers and paid staff, and (5) the failure to provide strong volunteer leadership (Eisner, Grimm, Maynard, & Washburn, 2009).

An earlier study performed by Hager and Brudney (2004) similarly found that the majority of volunteers stop donating their time and skills to an organization as a direct result of poor volunteer management. In their study, Hager and Brudney (2004) sought to identify the correlation between best volunteer management practices and volunteer retention. In order to do so, Hager and Brudney (2004) asked non-profit and charitable organizations to identify how successful their organizations have been in adopting a pre-determined list of best volunteer management practices. Best practices that included regular supervision and communication, screening procedures, written policies and job descriptions, recognition activities, and training and professional opportunities for volunteers and paid staff. The study found that organizations who report having adopted volunteer recognition activities, training and development opportunities, and screening procedures intended to match volunteers with appropriate tasks and assignments, report

having the highest volunteer retention rates (Hager & Brudney, 2004). The study also concludes that highly adopted volunteer management practices are not always widely favored by volunteers. According to Hager and Brudney (2004), two thirds of charitable and non-profit organizations report having adopted regular volunteer supervision and communication to a high degree. Surprisingly, these organizations report lower volunteer retention rates, as regular volunteer supervision can often remind volunteers of the grind of past or present occupations, making the volunteer experience less enjoyable (Hager & Brudney, 2004).

The study by Hager and Brudney (2004) also suggests that organizations with the greatest number of resources are not always the organizations with the highest volunteer retention rates. While some organizations employ a volunteer coordinator or manager, the employment of this individual does not always promote higher volunteer retention rates. Hager and Brudney's (2004) study indicates that organizations who employ a volunteer coordinator or manager often report having a higher adoption rate of best volunteer management practices. Though these higher adoption rates of best volunteer management practices may improve volunteer moral, they do not always translate to higher volunteer retention rates (Hager & Brudney, 2004).

According to a study by Jones, Forner, Parrish, Eidenfalk, and Kiridena (2015), volunteers are most satisfied with their volunteering job, and less likely to stop volunteering, when their basic psychological needs are met. The study conducted by Jones et al., utilizes the Self Determination Theory, a theory that states that individuals possess three basic psychological needs: 1) autonomy, or the need to possess control over what they do, 2) competence, the need to feel that we master or excel in the tasks or

things that we undertake, and 3) relatedness, the need to feel that we belong amongst the people or organizations in which we partner (Deci and Ryan, 1985). The 2015 study by Jones et al., concludes that organizations that meet the psychological needs of their volunteers, are most successful in retaining their volunteer workforce. The study also found, that leaders who adopt an autonomy supportive approach to managing, rather than a coercive or commanding approach, are more likely to build successful and long lasting working relationships with their volunteers (Jones et al., 2015).

Research conducted by Bussell and Forbes (2002) recognizes that a loss of volunteers, or decrease in volunteer participation, can create a discouraging pattern that often prevents present volunteers from continuing to volunteer. When a volunteer makes a decision to leave an organization, his or her impact is felt not only by the organization but also by the remaining volunteers, as the departed volunteer leaves behind a task or project that must then be completed by the remaining few volunteers (Bussell & Forbes, 2002). This additional workload can often promote low volunteer morale, and may ultimately result in the loss of additional volunteers.

### **Volunteer Motivation and Incentives**

When evaluating volunteer motivation, there are two primary positions that are commonly studied and discussed. The first position, intrinsic motivation, examines volunteer work as a form of individual sacrifice that is intended to enhance the lives of others (Menchik & Weisbrod, 1987). For many individuals, volunteer work is looked upon as a necessity in the creation and retention of civil communities (Wilson & Musick, 1999). Individuals take pride in assisting one another, and enjoy and value the building and maintaining of a civil society that is rooted in respect and tolerance. These

individuals foster the belief that they can make a difference in the world, and often receive enjoyment and satisfaction from seeing positive outcomes as a direct result of their volunteer efforts, and from working and engaging with others in a social environment (Wilson & Musick, 1999).

The second position of volunteer motivation, extrinsic motivation, examines volunteer work as a means to promote one's own interests and desires (Menchik & Weisbrod, 1987). Research conducted by Bussell and Forbes (2002), indicates that many individuals volunteer in order to improve their own skills, or to assist an organization or program that may subsequently benefit the individual volunteer. Although some individuals decide to donate their time and skills in order to assist or maintain a service that directly provides support to a family member or friend (Bussell & Forbes, 2002), others provide volunteer services in order to improve their own employment skills, or to gain a present or future financial benefit. According to Bussell and Forbes (2002), individuals often view volunteerism as an opportunity to create professional partnerships while simultaneously obtaining a hands-on professional experience. These experiences and professional relationships may one day lead to future career opportunities or advancements.

Extrinsic motivation also includes individuals who donate their time involuntarily. These individuals often view volunteerism as an obligation and solely take part in volunteer opportunities solely as a way to fulfill mandatory appointed community service, or to remain eligible for financial federal assistance (Bussell & Forbes, 2002). According to Laverie & McDonald (2007), individuals who volunteer solely to receive a benefit or reward often possess weaker levels of volunteer commitment. These

individuals frequently remain with an organization long enough to fulfill a mandatory obligation, or to receive an intended benefit, rather than volunteer for an extended period of time.

Volunteer activities are not typically chosen at random. According to research performed by Catano, Pond, and Kelloway (2001), individuals often chose to volunteer for an organization that shares a similar set of beliefs and values with that of the volunteer. As previously stated, arts or cultural volunteers in the year 2005 were 7 to 12 years older than volunteers in other organizations (Nichols, 2007). Their median age was 51, with 23% of arts or cultural volunteers being 65 years of age or older (Nichols, 2007). According to a study performed by Nagchoudhuri, McBride, Thirupathy, Morrow-Howell, and Tang (2005), older volunteers are more likely to reference an organization's mission and goals as the primary incentive for volunteering. The study by Nagchoudhuri et al., found that older volunteers are often more satisfied with intrinsic rewards, such as personal satisfaction, than they are with extrinsic rewards that often come in the form of trainings and stipends. Older volunteers also report being attracted to volunteer opportunities that provide them with social environments, shared workspaces, and transportation assistance (Nagchoudhuri et al., 2005).

A study conducted by McBride, Gonzales, Morrow-Howell, and McCrary (2011), recently examined the effects of monetary stipends on volunteer inclusion and retention in civic services. Of the 263 individuals who were surveyed and interviewed, 146 individuals reported receiving a stipend that does not exceed the market value for services rendered (McBride, Gonzales, Morrow-Howell, & McCrary, 2011). The average age was 65, and the average annual income of the survey group was \$30,000-\$35,000,

with non-stipended volunteers earning an average of \$30,000-\$35,000 and stipended volunteers earning an average of \$25,000-\$30,000. Sixty three percent of stipended volunteers stated that they would be unable participate without the stipend, and 27% of stipended individuals reported that the stipend still does not cover the cost of their participation (McBride, Gonzales, Morrow-Howell, & McCrary, 2011). In this study, stipended volunteers performed approximately 50% more volunteer hours per week, and served their organization for a longer period of time than their non-stipended counterparts (McBride, Gonzales, Morrow-Howell, & McCrary, 2011).

### **Recruitment**

When seeking out volunteer participants, organizations traditionally take an inward approach to identify organizational volunteer needs (Creyton, 2004). In this inwards approach, organizations identify their volunteer needs, establish and implement a volunteer recruitment plan, and select the volunteers who best meet the needs of the organization. While this model adequately fulfills an organization's need for volunteer labor, theorists like Creyton (2004) believe that this model limits volunteer involvement, and diminishes community building. Rather than limit volunteer involvement, Creyton (2004) believes that organizations should adopt a community building mindset that encourages a strength based volunteer approach. By seeking out volunteers who possess a variety of skillsets and matching them to appropriate organizational tasks, volunteers are treated less as a subsidiary group, and are given the opportunity to actively engage in the work that they are performing (Creyton, 2004). By creating a sense of belonging and ownership, individuals feel connected with their work, and therefore make the decision to



remain involved within an organization each and every time they volunteer (Creyton, 2004).

According to Creyton (2004), successful organizations are person centered, meaning that they provide individuals with a sense of belonging while simultaneously providing them with the opportunity to create lasting friendships, and professional working relationships. Organizations like these are flexible in structure, and recognize that their volunteers come from a variety of backgrounds, and possess varying levels of available time and volunteer commitment. According to Eisner et al. (2009), organizations who wish to attract skilled and dedicated volunteers must be willing to “expand their vision of volunteering by creating an experience that is meaningful for the volunteer, develops skills, demonstrates impact, and taps into volunteers’ abilities and interests.” (p. 35). This means that organizations must rethink their current policies and procedures and consider adopting and implementing best volunteer management practices. These practices may include regular supervision and communication with volunteers, liability coverage or insurance protection for volunteers, regular collection of volunteer numbers and hours, screening procedures to identify suitable volunteers, written policies and job descriptions for volunteers, recognition activities, training and professional development opportunities, and training for paid staff in working with volunteers (Hager & Brudney, 2004).

### **Methodology**

The purpose of this study was to characterize the Maine performing arts volunteer while concurrently identifying the incentives and hindrances that either encourage or discourage volunteer participation. Towards this end, this study surveyed individuals 18

years of age or older who volunteer their time and services to professional performing arts organizations within the state of Maine. Data was collected utilizing an electronic survey that was created using SNAP survey software, and the responses were securely housed on the University of Southern Maine server. Participation was anonymous, and individuals were discouraged from answering any questions that may identify themselves or any other person. Participants did not receive any form of compensation in exchange for their participation in this study.

In order to reach a diverse pool of active performing arts volunteers, professional performing arts organizations from across the state were contacted via this study's Primary Investigator. Permission to poll the organization's current pool of volunteers was obtained directly from the Executive Director of each organization. Survey material was distributed by either the organization's Executive Director, a Volunteer Coordinator, or an appropriately appointed individual. The electronic surveys were distributed via email between the months of November of 2016 and January 2017. Ninety-two surveys were completed and submitted.

The electronic survey questions were divided into three subcategories: (1) volunteer demographics; (2) incentives, benefits, and recruitment; and (3) hindrances and retention. In section one, volunteer demographics, individuals were asked to answer a series of questions identifying their individual age, gender, race, educational background, employment status, annual income, religious affiliation, and family demographics. Individuals were not required to provide sensitive information, and were given the option of selecting "prefer not to answer." Individuals were also asked a series of questions pertaining to their volunteer roles and responsibilities, and the approximate number of

volunteer hours spent assisting performing arts organizations in the state of Maine on a weekly, monthly, and annual basis. In section two, individuals were asked to answer a series of questions regarding individual incentives, rewards and benefits, and organization recruitment techniques. In the final section, hindrances and retention, individuals were asked to rate how well the performing arts organizations in which they currently volunteer has adopted a pre-determined list of best volunteer management practices. Best practices included regular volunteer supervision and communication, employee and volunteer training, recognition activities, screening procedures and skill matching, regular collection of volunteer information, and development opportunities. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix C.

### **Results and Findings**

Ninety two completed surveys were submitted between the months of November 2016 and January 2017. Of those 92 surveys, 84.8% of participants identified as being female, and the remaining 15.2% of participants identified as being male. 0% of participants selected the “other” or “prefer not to answer” options. The volunteers reside in eight of Maine’s 16 counties, including Sagadahoc, Cumberland, York, Androscoggin, Kennebec, Penobscot, Knox, and Hancock, and cover an approximate 175 mile radius. Their ethnicities are White or Caucasian (92.4%), Mixed (2.2%), and American Indian or Alaskan Native (1.1%). The remaining 4.3% of participants selected “prefer not to answer.” Asian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic or Latino, Black or African American, Middle Eastern or Arab American, and Other, each received 0%. In addition, all 92 participants willingly offered up their age, with 0% of participants being between the ages of 18-24, 1.1% of participants being between the ages of 25-34, 6.5% of participants

being between the ages of 35-44, 13% of participants being between the ages of 45-54, 31.5% of participants being between the ages of 55-64, 37% of participants being between the ages of 65-74, and 10% of participants being 75 years of age or older. The ages of the participants can be seen in figure A.

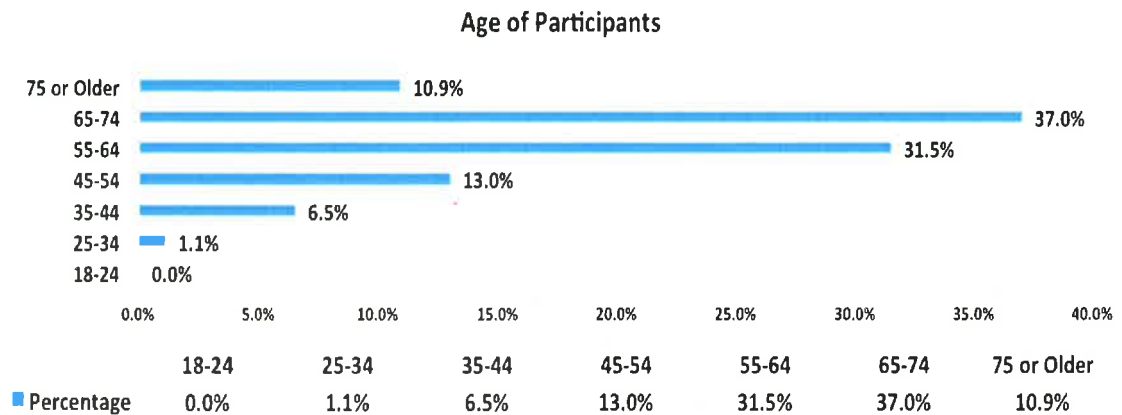


Figure A.

The majority of participants, or 53.3%, reported being married, with 22.8% of participants being either separated or divorced, 9.8% of participants being widowed, and the remaining 13% of participants being single. An additional 1.1% of participants selected “prefer not to answer,” and 8.7% of participants reported having children under the age of 18. When asked about their religious affiliation, 21.7% of participants identified with Catholicism, 14.1% identified with Protestantism, 8.7% identified with Christianity, 5.4% identified with Judaism, and 8.7% identified with an Inter/Non-denominational religion. 28.3% of participants stated that they do not identify with an organized religion, while 5.4% of participants selected “other,” and 7.6% selected “prefer not to answer.”

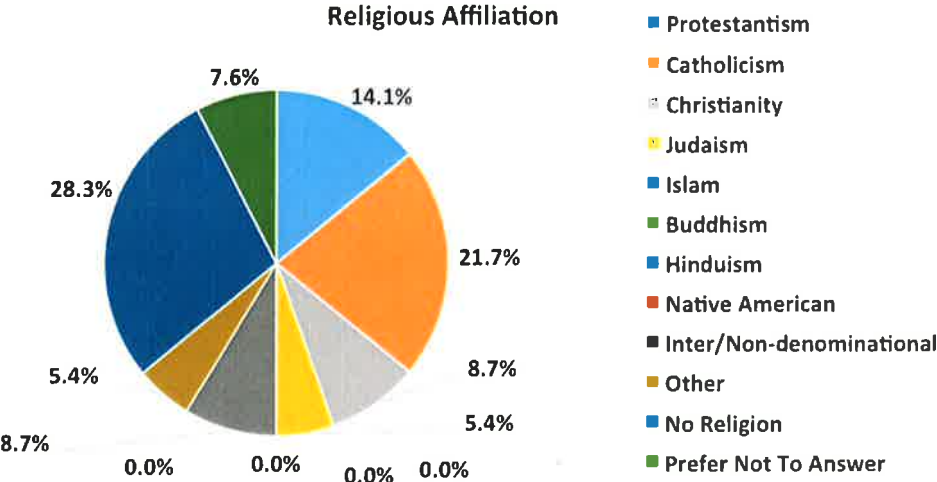


Figure B.

Participants were next asked to answer a series of questions regarding their educational history and present employment status. Of the 92 participants, 98.9% of volunteers reported having obtained a high school degree or its equivalent. An additional 15.4% of participants reported having obtained an Associates Degree, while 30.4% of participants reported having obtained a Bachelors Degree, and 44.6% of participants reported having obtained a Graduate Degree. In terms of employment, 37% of participants reported being employed full time, 16.3% reported being employed part-time, and 41.3% reported being retired. Of the remaining 4.3% of participants who reported being unemployed, 100% of participants stated that they were not actively searching for work.

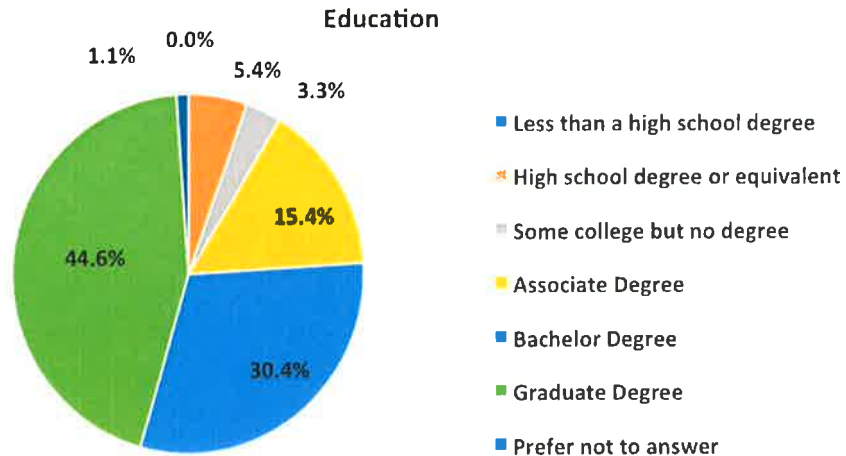


Figure C.

Although 15.2% of individuals chose not to disclose their approximate annual household income, the majority of those who participated, or 28.3%, reported having an annual household income between \$50,000 and \$74,999. The approximate annual income of all 78 participants can be found in Figure D.

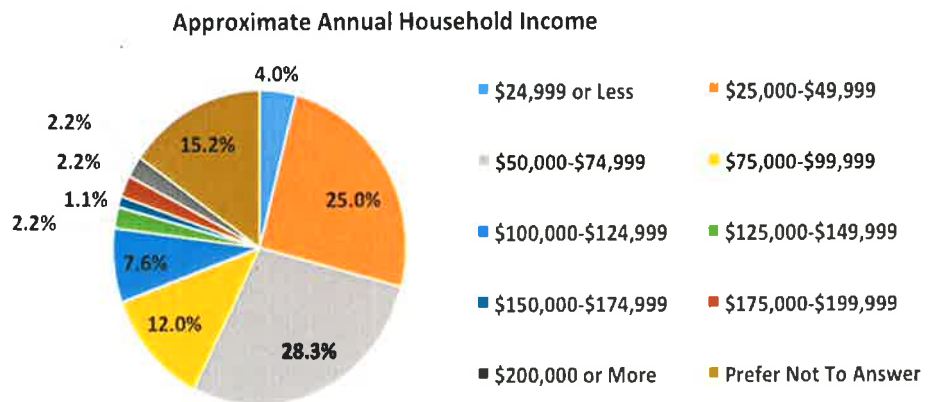


Figure D.

Of the 92 surveys that were returned, 96.7% of participants stated that they currently volunteer for one or more performing arts organizations. Of the 92 participants, 57.6% of participants reported volunteering for one primary arts organization, while 24%

of participants reported volunteering for two performing arts organizations, and 17.4% of participants reported actively volunteering for three or more performing arts organizations. Their roles and responsibilities within the performing arts organizations in which they serve can be found in figure E.

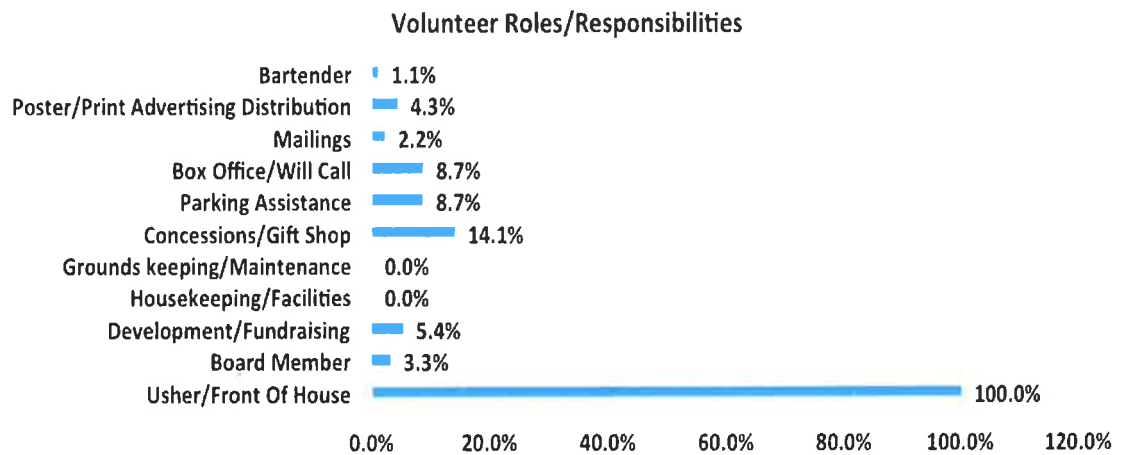


Figure E.

After identifying their volunteer roles and responsibilities, participants were asked to write in the approximate number of hours that they spend volunteering in a professional performing arts organization in the state of Maine on weekly, monthly, and yearly basis. On a weekly basis, with only 53.3% of participants reporting, the median answer was one hour. On a monthly basis, with 71.7% of participants reporting, the median answer was 1-5 hours. On a yearly basis, with 88% of participants reporting, the median answer was 35-45 hours.

In section two, participants were provided with a list of pre-determined benefits and incentives, and were then asked to rate how important each of the benefits and incentives are when selecting a performing arts organization in which to donate their time and skills. Participants were asked to rate the benefits and incentives on a scale of 0-10,

with 0-3 indicating “little to no importance,” 4-6 indicating “average importance,” and 7-10 indicating “important to very important.” The results were as follows:

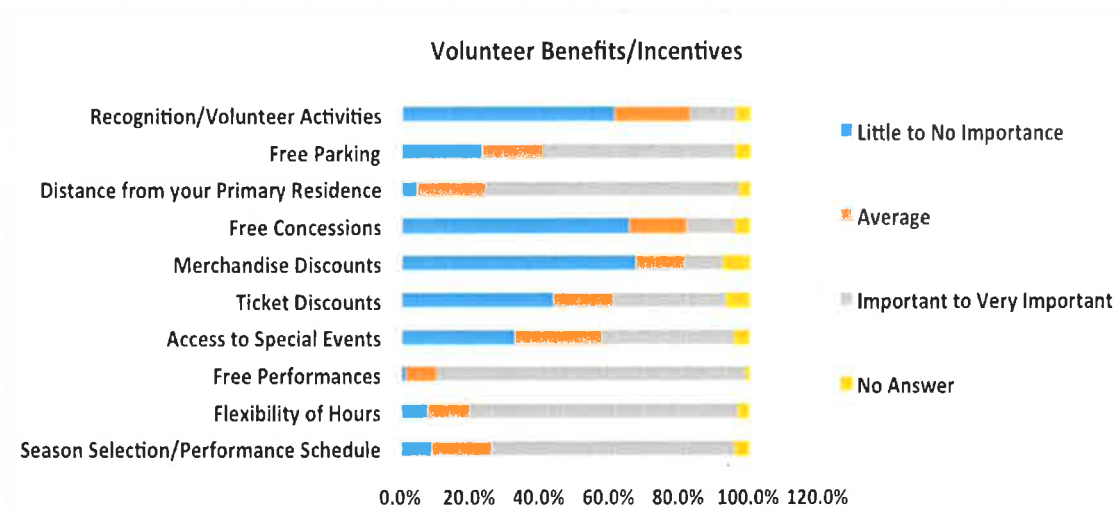


Figure F.

Of the 92 participants, 89.2% of volunteers rated the ability to attend the performance or event in which they are working free of charge as a primary benefit and incentive. Additionally, 68.6% of participants stated that the season selection and performance schedule of an organization plays an integral role when selecting a performing arts organization in which to volunteer.

72.9% of participants stated that the location of the performing arts organization in relation to their primary residence was important when seeking out performing arts volunteer opportunities. The majority of volunteers, or 40.2% of individuals, stated that they would be willing to travel 20 miles or less in order to volunteer for a performing arts organization. Similarly, 27.2% of volunteers stated that they would be willing to travel 10 miles or less to volunteer, 18.5% of volunteers stated that they would be willing to travel 30 miles or less, 7.6% of volunteers stated that they would be willing to travel 40 miles or less, and 3.2% of volunteers stated that they would be willing to travel 50 miles or less.



The remaining 3.2% of volunteers stated that they would be willing to travel 60 miles or less. It is important to note, that 97.8% of individuals stated they do not receive any form of a stipend in exchange for their volunteer services.

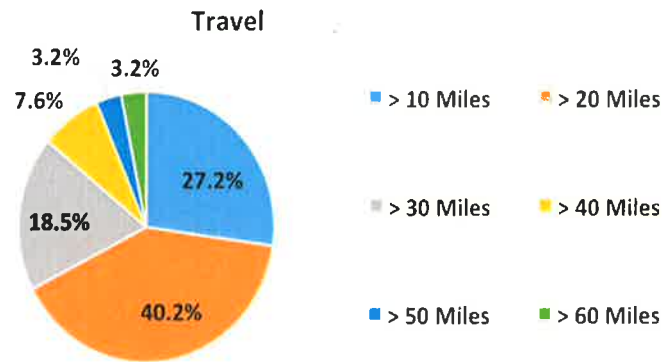


Figure G.

Of the 92 survey participants, 100% of volunteers selected email as the primary form of communication between themselves and the performing arts organization in which they volunteer. 45.7% of individuals stated that they became a performing arts volunteer by approaching the individual organization, where as 42.4% of individuals stated that they were asked to volunteer by a family member or friend, and 6.5% of individuals where asked to volunteer directly by the performing arts organization. 1.1% of participants stated that they began volunteering after having seeing an advertisement in a local newspaper. When asked if participants would be likely to attend a similar event if they were not volunteering, 23.9% stated that they would be “very likely” to attend a similar event, 45.7% stated that they where “somewhat likely” to attend a similar event, and the remaining 14.2% of participants stated that they where either “somewhat unlikely” or “unlikely” to attend a similar event. The outstanding 15.2% of participants remained neutral.

At the completion of section two, Individuals were provided with a list of pre-determined motivational statements, and then asked to rate each statement on a scale of 0-10, with 0-3 indicating “I do not agree, or I agree a little,” 4-6 indicating a neutral level of agreement, and 7-10 indicating “I agree or I highly agree.” The results were as follows:

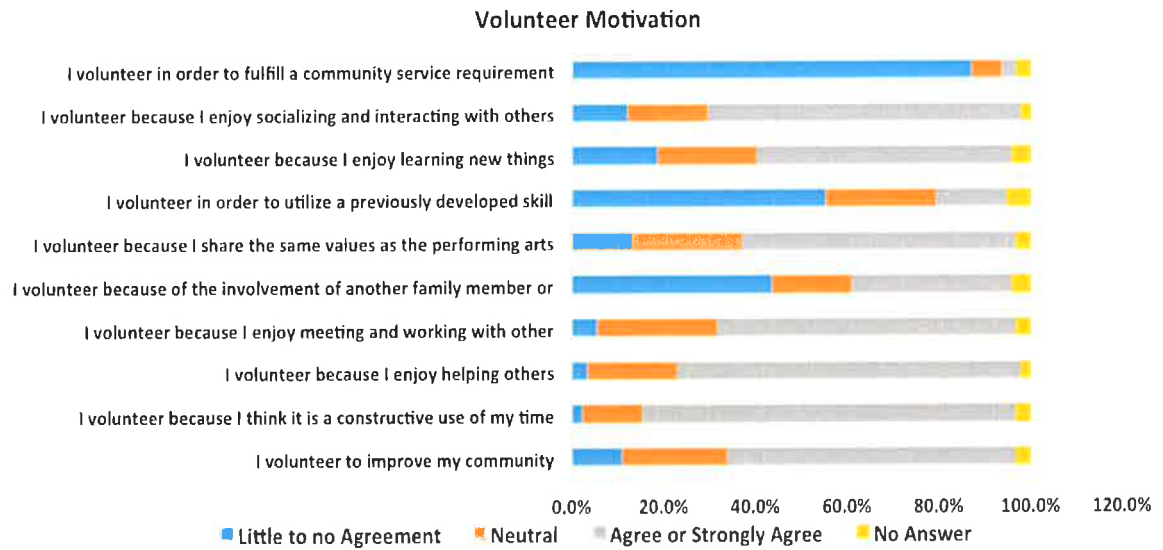


Figure H.

The statements with the highest level of volunteer agreement, were “I volunteer because I think it is a constructive use of my time” (81.5%), “I volunteer because I enjoy helping others” (75%), and “I volunteer because I enjoy socializing or interacting with others” (68.5%). The statements with the highest level of disagreement were “I volunteer in order to fulfill a community service requirement” (87%), “I volunteer in order to utilize a previously developed skill” (55.3%), and “I volunteer because of the involvement of another family member or friend” (43.5%).

In section three, individuals were asked a series of questions surrounding volunteer retention and organizational communication. When surveyed, 28.3% of

participants stated that they had previously made a decision to stop volunteering for a professional performing arts organization. Of those 28.3%, 34.6% of individuals stated that they chose to stop volunteering as a direct result of poor volunteer management, while 27% of participants stated that they chose to stop volunteering because they possessed limited volunteer time and availability. Other explanations included limited volunteer recognition (3.8%), recurring or developing medical issues (7.7%), the death of a spouse or volunteer partner (3.8%), unsafe or uncomfortable working conditions (3.8%), previous volunteer commitments (3.8%), uniform requirements (3.8%), difficulties working with full time staff members (3.8%), a relocation or move (3.8%), and a lack of personal enjoyment (3.8%).

In order to gain information regarding the management of volunteers, participants were provided with a list of pre-determined best volunteer management practices, and were then asked to rate whether or not the practice has been successfully adopted by the various professional performing arts organizations across the state. Once again, individuals were given a scale of 0-10 in which to rate the organization, with 0-3 indicating “little to no adoption,” 4-6 indicating an “average” level of adoption, and 7-10 indicating a “high level” of adoption. The results were as follows:

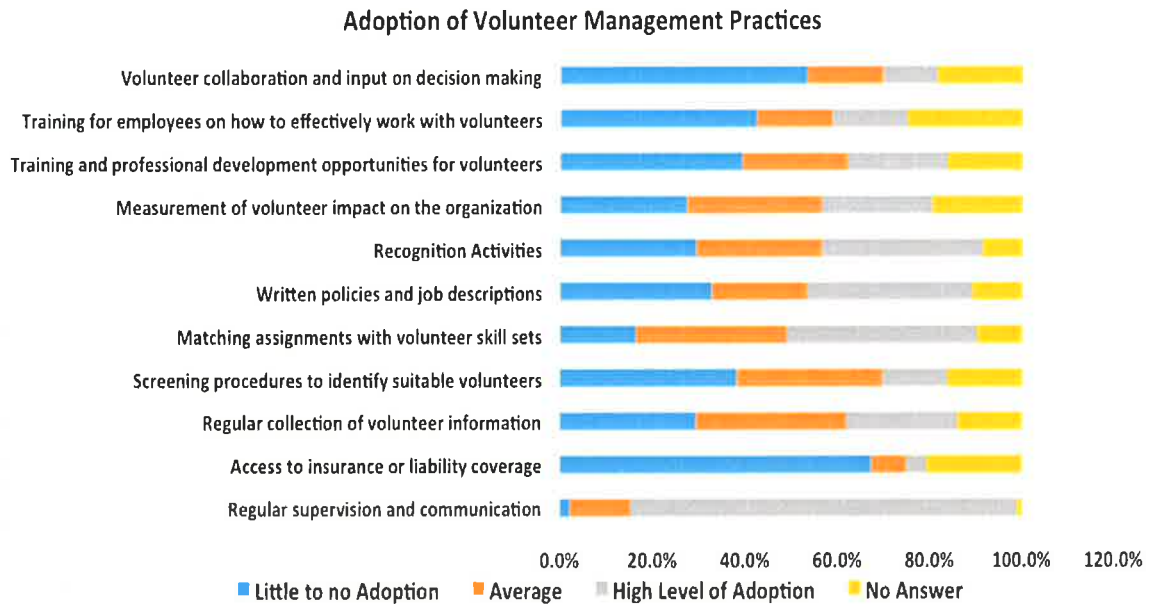


Figure I.

According to the survey results, the volunteer management practices with the highest reported level of adoption included "regular supervision and communication" (83.7%), "matching assignment with volunteer skillsets" (41.3%), and "written policies and job descriptions" (35.9%). The volunteer management practices with the lowest reported level of adoption included "access to insurance or liability coverage" (4.4%), "volunteer collaboration and input on decision making" (11.9%), and "screening procedures to identify suitable volunteers" (14.1%).

### Discussion

This exploratory study reveals that the demographics of performing arts volunteers in the state of Maine often exceed the national average. A previous study conducted by the National Endowment for the Arts, reported that the median age of arts and cultural volunteers in the United States was 51, and that 23% of arts and cultural volunteers were 65 years of age or older (Nichols, 2007). The results of this study

illustrated that the median age of Maine performing arts volunteers is within the range of 55-64, four to 13 years older than the national median, and that 37% of Maine performing arts volunteers are between the ages of 65 and 74. An additional 10.9% of Maine performing arts volunteers reported being 75 years of age or older, meaning that 47.9% of Maine performing arts volunteers are 65 years of age or older, more than twice the national average. Though this number may surprise readers, it is important to remember that the state of Maine possess one of the oldest populations in the country, and that 22.3% of Maine residents in 2012, were 60 years of age or older (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). With predictions denoting that the number of Maine residents 60 years of age or older is anticipated to increase to 31.4% by the year 2030 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012), it is vital that performing arts organizations across the state focus their attention on recruiting volunteers from other age demographics.

When continuing to compare the Maine performing arts volunteer against the national average, the Maine performing arts volunteer continues to surpass the national average in regards to ethnicity, education, and marital status. While the number of performing arts volunteers in the state of Maine who identify as female well exceeds the national average, the number of Maine performing arts volunteers who identify as male falls below the national average. The following table compares and contrasts the Maine performing arts volunteer with the national average.

Maine Performing Arts Volunteers			
		National Endowment for the Arts (2012)	Current Maine Study (2017)
Gender	Female	60%	84.8%
	Male	40%	15.2%

Age	64 or Younger	77%	52.1%
	65 of Older	23%	47.9%
Ethnicity/Race	White/Caucasian	87%	92.4%
	African American	5.4%	0%
	Asian	6%	0%
	Hispanic	4%	0%
Marital Status	Married	49%	53.3%
	Single	28%	13%
	Other (includes Widows/Widowers)	23%	32.6%
Children	With Children under the age of 18	17%	8.7%
	Without children under the age of 18	83%	91.3%
Education	With A College Degree	62%	90.4%
	Without A College Degree	38%	8.7%

Table A.

With 47.9% of Maine performing arts volunteers being 65 years of age or older, it should come as no surprise to the reader that Maine performing arts volunteers fall below the national average when it comes to having children under the age of 18. Subsequently, Maine performing arts volunteers are less likely to be single, then they are married, divorced, or widowed, and the percentage of Maine performing arts volunteers who are married, divorced, or widowed once again exceeds the national average.

According to the National Endowment for the Arts, 42.8% of arts and cultural volunteers took their own initiative in order to become involved with the organization in which they currently perform volunteer services (Nichols, 2007). Additionally, 44.3% of arts and cultural volunteers, a slightly larger percentage, stated that they were asked to

volunteer directly by the organization (Nichols, 2012). Of the 92 performing arts volunteers who were surveyed in the state of Maine, 45.7% took their own initiative and approached the organization in which they volunteer, where as only 6.5% of volunteers where asked to volunteer directly by the organization. The remaining 42.4% of Maine volunteers stated that there were asked to volunteer by a family member or friend, reinforcing The National Endowment for the Arts finding's that "arts or cultural organizations, may rely more heavily on social networking to attract volunteers" (Nichols, 2007). These numbers, indicate that Maine performing arts organizations may have something to gain by going out into their communities and personally recruiting future volunteers.

In 2005, arts and cultural volunteers across the country reported performing a median of 70 volunteer hours (Nichols, 2007), whereas Maine performing arts volunteers in 2017 recently reported performing a lower median of 35 to 45 hours per year. In the state of Maine, all 92 performing arts volunteers stated that they usher or perform front of house responsibilities as part of their volunteer functions. This number, which is significantly larger than the 17.2% of arts and cultural volunteers who reported performing similar functions in the 2005 US Census Bureau survey (Nichols, 2012), implies that there may be additional volunteer functions and tasks that have yet to be explored by Maine performing arts organizations. An equally large discrepancy can be found regarding organizational fundraising. In the state of Maine, only 5.4% of performing arts volunteers stated that they perform fundraising or development responsibilities as part of their volunteer work, where as 34.6% of national arts or cultural

volunteers stated that they fundraise or sell items to raise money for the organization in which they volunteer (Nichols, 2007).

Of the 92 survey participants, 69.6% of volunteers stated that they would be “very likely” or “somewhat likely” to attend a similar event or organization if they were not currently volunteering. A number that indicates that season selection is equally important to both performing arts volunteers and ticket buyers. Though the majority of Maine performing arts volunteers indicated that the season selection and performance schedule of a given performing arts organization is extremely important when seeking out volunteer opportunities, there appear to be additional factors that may encourage or discourage volunteer participation in Maine performing arts organizations. As previously stated, the majority of Maine performing arts volunteers do not receive any form of compensation or stipend in exchange for their volunteer time and services. As a direct result, Maine performing arts volunteers tend to favor incentives and benefits that do not add an additional financial burden for the individual volunteer. Maine performing arts volunteers favor the opportunity to attend the event in which they are volunteering free of charge, and often seek out opportunities that are within 30 miles or less of their primary residence. While some volunteers are willing to drive a further distance, the majority of Maine performing arts volunteers would prefer that parking be provided at no additional cost to the volunteer.

Maine performing arts volunteers are drawn to both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. While they favor being able to attend the event in which they are working free of charge, the majority of Maine performing arts volunteers believe that their volunteer time and services enhance both the performing arts organization and the surrounding



community. Of the 92 survey participants, 81.5% of volunteers believe that volunteering for a Maine performing arts organization is a constructive use of their time. Additionally, 75% of volunteers stated that they volunteer because they enjoy helping others, and 63.1% stated that they volunteer in order to improve or enhance their community. As suggested in the literature, individuals sometimes volunteer in order to socialize and interact with other individuals (Wilson & Musick, 1999). Sixty eight percent of Maine performing arts volunteers stated that they volunteer because they enjoy socializing and interacting with other volunteers, while 65.2% of Maine performing arts volunteers stated that they volunteer because they enjoy meeting and working with others.

Of the 92 survey participants, 28.3% of Maine performing arts volunteers indicated that they have previously chosen to stop volunteering for a performing arts organization. Of those 28.3% of individuals, 34.6% of volunteers stated that they chose to stop volunteering as a direct result of poor volunteer management, whereas 26.9% of volunteers stated that they chose to stop volunteering as a result of limited time and availability. These numbers reinforce Hager and Brudney's (2004) previous study that concluded that volunteers are more likely to stop contributing time and services to a given organization as a result of poor volunteer management than they are a lack of time or interest. So what can performing arts organizations in the state of Maine do to improve the individual volunteer experience?

When asked to rate how well Maine performing arts organizations have been in adopting a given list of best volunteer management practices, Maine volunteers indicated that there are still improvements that could be made in regards to volunteer decision making, screening procedures, and effective employee/volunteer collaboration. The

majority of Maine performing arts volunteers, or 53.3% of survey participants, stated that their current volunteer organization could be improved by seeking out volunteer collaboration and input when decision making. Additionally, 42.3% of Maine performing arts volunteers stated that their performing arts organization would benefit from training employees on how to effectively work with volunteers, and 39.1% of volunteers similarly stated that their performing arts organization could improve upon the volunteer experience by offering training and professional development opportunities for their volunteer work force. Lastly, 38.1% of Maine performing arts volunteers stated that their volunteer organization could be improved by implementing screening procedures that would accurately identify suitable volunteers.

### **Conclusion**

The primary purpose of this study was to identify the Maine performing arts volunteer, and to distinguish the incentives and hindrances that either encourage or discourage volunteer participation in Maine performing arts organizations. The survey, which was completed by 92 Maine performing arts volunteers representing eight counties, determined that the Maine performing arts volunteer is older and less diverse than the national average. Though Maine performing arts volunteers donate approximately 35-45 hours of service per year, primarily serving as ushers or front of house attendants, the Maine performing arts volunteer is often underutilized by their performing arts organizations. As a direct result, the Maine performing art volunteer donates fewer hours of service per year than the national average.

The Maine performing arts volunteer values both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. They enjoy helping others and enriching their communities, yet are often hindered by

additional financial burdens and poor volunteer management. They value socializing and building collaborative relationships with other volunteers and paid employees, though many volunteers recognize that the performing arts organizations in which they currently provide services have yet to succeed in identifying the proper methods in which to recruit and identify appropriate volunteers. Maine performing arts volunteers enjoy being part of the decision-making process, and long to be recognized as collaborative partners. Unfortunately, the majority of Maine performing arts volunteers stated that their current performing arts organization could be improved by providing additional training to paid employees on how to effectively work with volunteers.

Though this study does not provide the reader with a concrete method for volunteer recruitment and retention, it has identified valuable information that may assist professional performing arts organizations within the state of Maine in the creation and implementation of successful volunteer recruitment and retention plans. Just as the age old adage suggests, quality may once again persevere over quantity.

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## Appendix A

## Survey

**Volunteer Recruitment and Retention in Maine Performing Arts Organizations**

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. You may skip applicable questions by selecting "Prefer not to answer."

**Section #1: Volunteer Demographics**

- Q1 What is your gender?
- Male
  - Female
  - Other
  - Prefer not to answer
- Q2 What is your age?
- 18-24
  - 25-34
  - 35-44
  - 45-54
  - 55-64
  - 65-74
  - 75 or older
  - Prefer not to answer
- Q3 Which ethnicity do you most identify with?
- American Indian or Alaskan Native
  - Asian or Pacific Islander
  - Hispanic or Latino
  - Black or African American
  - Middle Eastern or Arab American
  - White or Caucasian
  - Mixed
  - Other
  - Prefer not to answer
- Q4 What is the highest level of school that you have completed, or the highest degree that you have received?
- Less than high school degree
  - High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)

Some college but no degree  
Associate Degree  
Bachelor Degree  
Graduate Degree  
Prefer not to answer

Q5 What is your marital status?

Single  
Married  
Widowed  
Divorced or Separated  
Prefer not to answer

Q6 Do you have any children under the age of 18?

Yes  
No  
Prefer not to answer

Q7 Which of the following best describes your employment status?

Employed, working full-time  
Employed, working part-time  
Not employed, looking for work  
Not employed, not looking for work  
Retired  
Disabled, not able to work  
Prefer not to answer

Q8 What is your approximate average household income?

\$0 - \$24,999  
\$25,000 - \$49,999  
\$50,000 - \$74,999  
\$75,000 - \$99,999  
\$100,000 - \$124,999  
\$125,000 - \$149,999  
\$150,000 - \$174,999  
\$175,000 - \$199,999  
\$200,000 and up  
Prefer not to answer

Q9 Do you identify with any of the following religions?

Protestantism  
Catholicism  
Christianity  
Judaism

Islam  
Buddhism  
Hinduism  
Native American  
Inter/Non-denominational  
Other  
No religion  
Prefer not to answer

Q10 What is the area or postal code of your primary residence?

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Q11 Do you currently volunteer for a performing arts organization?

Yes  
No

Q12 How many performing arts organizations do you currently volunteer for?

0  
1  
2  
3 or more

Q13 What type of work do you typically perform within the performing arts organization in which you volunteer? (Please select all that apply.)

Usher/Front of House  
Board Member  
Development/Fundraising  
Housekeeping/Facilities  
Grounds keeping/Maintenance  
Concessions/Gift Shop  
Parking Assistance  
Box Office/Will Call  
Other

If other, please specify.

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Q14 In a typical WEEK, approximately how many hours do you spend volunteering for a performing arts organization?

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Q15 In a typical MONTH, approximately how many hours do you spend volunteering for a performing arts organization?

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Q16 In a typical YEAR, approximately how many hours do you spend volunteering for a performing arts organization?

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**Section #2: Incentives, Benefits, and Recruitment**

Q17 How important to you are the following benefits and incentives when selecting a performing arts organization in which to volunteer for?

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Not At All										Very
Season Selection/Performance Schedule											
Flexibility of Hours											
Free Performances											
Access to Special Events											
Ticket Discounts											
Merchandise Discounts											
Free Concessions											
Distance from your Primary Residence											
Free Parking											
Recognition/Volunteer Activities											

Q18 How far are you willing to travel in order to volunteer for a performing arts organization?

- 10 miles or less
- 20 miles or less
- 30 miles or less
- 40 miles or less
- 50 miles or less
- 60 miles or less

Q19 Do you currently receive a stipend from a performing arts organization in exchange for your volunteer services?

Yes

No

Prefer not to answer

Q20 If you were not volunteering, how likely would you be to attend a similar event or organization?

Very likely

Somewhat likely

Neither likely or unlikely

Somewhat unlikely

Unlikely

Q21 On a scale of 0-10, do you agree with the following statement?

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Do Not Agree										Agree
I volunteer to improve my community											
I volunteer because I think it is a constructive use of my leisure time											
I volunteer because I enjoy helping others											
I volunteer because I enjoy meeting and working with other volunteers											
I volunteer because of the involvement of another family member or friend											
I volunteer because I share the same values as the performing arts organization											
I volunteer in order to utilize a previously developed skill											
I volunteer because I enjoy learning new things											
I volunteer because I enjoy socializing and interacting with others											
I volunteer in order to fulfill a community service requirement											

Q22 How did you become a performing arts volunteer?

I was asked by the organization

I approached the organization

I was asked to join by a family member or friend

Other  
If other, please specify.

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**Section #3: Hindrances and Retention**

Q23 Have you ever chosen to stop volunteering for a performing arts organization?  
Yes  
No

Q24 What was the primary reason for your departure?  
I have not departed a performing arts organization  
Limited time and availability  
Loss of interest  
Poor volunteer management  
Poor communication  
Limited recognition  
Other  
If other, please specify.

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Q25 What is the primary form of communication between you and the performing arts organization in which you volunteer?  
Social Media  
Email  
Telephone  
Print Mail  
Other  
If other, please specify.

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Please click "submit" at the bottom of the page to publish your answers.

Thank you for your participation in this survey.