COMMUNITY ORGANIZING FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: A PROGRAM
EVALUATION OF THE MAINE DOWNTOWN CENTER

By

Sarah Ray Barrington

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By

Sarah Ray Barrington

Approved by the Master's Thesis Committee:

Mary E. Virnoche, Committee Chair

Judith K. Little, Committee Member

Jennifer L. Eichstedt, Committee Member

Jennifer L. Eichstedt, Graduate Coordinator

Chris A. Hopper, Dean for Research and Graduate Studies
COMMUNITY ORGANIZING FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: A PROGRAM EVALUATION OF THE MAINE DOWNTOWN CENTER

Sarah Ray Barrington

This project is a program evaluation of the Maine Downtown Center. The Maine Downtown Center (MDC), a program of the Maine Development Foundation, a 501 (c)(3), offers services on two levels. MDC serves as a resource to all downtowns in the state of Maine that have the desire to revitalize their downtowns and it provides assistance to designated Main Street Maine communities. Main Street Maine communities are selected by MDC through a competitive process based on specific criteria.

The Maine Downtown Center (MDC) was fairly new at the time of this project and had not been previously assessed. The executive director of MDC expressed perceived tensions between key stakeholders. The intent of the MDC program evaluation was to discover perceptions of key stakeholders of MDC: Advisory Board Members and Main Street Maine Downtown Managers, interpreted as indicators of program effectiveness.

Because non-profits have transitioned in the last few decades through adoption of more business-like practices, there has been an increased interest in determining criteria for non-profit effectiveness. Two of the most emergent theories in determining
stakeholder perceptions of non-profit organizational effectiveness are the multiple constituency and social constructionist models.

There were four prevalent themes that arose out of the qualitative interviews of the board members and downtown managers. Tensions of key stakeholders were based on perceptions that the executive director was not responsive to their needs, consistent in services provided, did not create formal or informal mechanisms for open dialogue, and did not perform needs assessments.

Using the perspectives of the multiple constituency and social constructionist models, recommendations were made based on shaping stakeholder perceptions through management strategies that include responsiveness, consistency, open dialogue, and needs assessments. Because the literature on determining non-profit organizational effectiveness is limited in general, and considering stakeholder perceptions as criteria for effectiveness even more limited, there is a need for longitudinal studies of organizations that use management strategies to shape stakeholder perceptions to determine if these strategies influence perceptions and/or actual organizational effectiveness.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT........................................................................................................................................ iii

TABLE OF CONTENTS................................................................................................................... v

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION........................................................................................................ 1

CHAPTER II STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS AND NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS .............................................................................................................. 5

  Introduction................................................................................................................................. 5

  Brief History of Non-Profits and Business Practices.................................................................. 6

  Issues with Non-Profit Organization and Business Practices ................................................... 7

  Evaluating Effectiveness and Popular Models ............................................................................ 9

  Multiple Constituency and Social Constructionist Models .......................................................... 12

  Shaping Stakeholder Perceptions............................................................................................... 14

  Non-Profit Organizations and Responsiveness......................................................................... 15

  Non-Profit Organizations and Consistency ............................................................................... 16

  Open Dialogue and Needs Assessments.................................................................................... 17

CHAPTER III METHODS .............................................................................................................. 19

CHAPTER IV: MDC PROGRAM EVALUATION ........................................................................ 21

  Table of Contents......................................................................................................................... 22

  Maine Downtown Center: A Brief Description............................................................................ 24

  Methodology................................................................................................................................. 26

  Demographics............................................................................................................................... 27

  MDC Advisory Board.................................................................................................................. 27

  MSM Downtown Managers.......................................................................................................... 27
Suggestions from the Advisory Board................................................................. 41

Additional Programming ................................................................................... 41

Building Relationships with Other Groups and Organizations...................... 41

Board Member Concerns and Priorities for MDC............................................ 43

Recommendations............................................................................................... 44

CHAPTER V: PLACEMENT DISCUSSION............................................................. 46

Introduction........................................................................................................... 46

Brief History of Placement .................................................................................. 46

Challenges.............................................................................................................. 48

Benefits................................................................................................................ 49

Recommendations............................................................................................... 51

CHAPTER VI: REFERENCES................................................................................... 53
CHAPTER I:
INTRODUCTION

This master’s project began in July of 2006 as a program evaluation of the Maine Downtown Center. The Maine Downtown Center is a program of the Maine Development Foundation. The Maine Development Foundation is a private, non-profit corporation with an IRS 501 (c)(3) status and was created by the governor and legislature in 1978 to promote economic sustainability in the state of Maine. Including the Maine Downtown Center, the Maine Development Foundation has nine programs that focus on leadership, higher education and skills of workers, development of creative solutions, and informing and guiding policy decisions. At the time of this master’s project, the Maine Development Foundation had a paid staff of nine, a board of directors with 20 professionals from throughout the state of Maine, volunteers and 300 members. Fee-for-service, private contributions, memberships, and foundations funded the Maine Development Foundation, with no general state appropriation and only 10% of revenue from state government contracts.

The Maine Downtown Center was created in 2000 by the state of Maine Legislature (LD 2600) to encourage downtown revitalization in the state of Maine. When established, the Maine Downtown Center was originally coordinated by the Maine State Planning Office and the Department of Economic and Community Development and is now housed in the Maine Development Foundation. The Maine Downtown Center had
one part-time coordinator, volunteers, community partners, and an advisory board comprised of no less than fifteen members from professional areas such as business, consulting, engineering, non-profit organizations, and state agencies and was funded by a mix of private and public funds. The mission of the Maine Downtown Center is to promote community based downtown development focused on business growth, cultural enhancement, economic development, housing revitalization, historic preservation, and job creation.

The Maine Downtown Center’s objectives are to provide training and technical assistance to willing and able communities that wish to revitalize their downtowns, promote and build awareness about the importance of healthy downtowns, and serve as source of information about downtown development in the state of Maine. In order to fulfill its mission, the Maine Downtown Center offers service on two levels. First, it serves as a resource to all downtowns in the state of Maine that have the desire to revitalize their downtowns. Second, it provides assistance to designated Main Street Maine communities.

In 2001, the Maine Downtown Center introduced the Main Street Maine program. The Maine Downtown Center is affiliated with the National Main Street Center, a program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The Main Street Approach to Downtown Revitalization™ is an economic model established by the National Trust for Historic Preservation to promote traditional downtown revitalization with a focus on private-public partnerships and community support and has been successful in more than 40 states. Main Street Maine communities are selected by the Maine Downtown Center
through a statewide competitive process based on specific criteria related to a community’s willingness and ability to revitalize its downtowns. The application process is focused on broad-based community support, and requires that communities hire a professional downtown manager. Once a community is designated, the Maine Downtown Center provides community leaders with expert staff, consulting assistance on the Main Street Four-Point Approach™ of organization, promotion, economic restructuring, and design.

In May of 2006, the Maine Development Foundation requested that I perform a program evaluation of the Maine Downtown Center. At the time of the request, the Maine Downtown Center was a reasonably new program that had not been previously assessed. The Maine Development Foundation was concerned with key stakeholder perceptions of the Maine Downtown Center rather than effectiveness of Main Street Maine downtown managers. Lori Allen, the program coordinator of the Maine Downtown Center became my field placement supervisor. She was concerned with perceived tensions between staff members, board members, and the executive director. She felt that key stakeholders would be more receptive to an unbiased outsider. The primary intent of the program evaluation request was to discover key stakeholder perceptions interpreted as indicators of program effectiveness. The central deliverable of my master’s field placement was to research and prepare a program evaluation report based on the perceptions of key stakeholders of the Maine Downtown Center and to offer recommendations based on the key findings.
This written report for my field placement consists of four major pieces: A review of the literature surrounding contemporary theories that study stakeholder perceptions and non-profit organizational effectiveness; methods used to perform this placement; the Maine Downtown Center program evaluation report, which was submitted to the Maine Development Foundation in 2007 to be used onsite and at their annual conference held in June of 2007; and a discussion of my field placement with recommendations for students interested in doing out-of-area placements.
CHAPTER II

STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS AND NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Introduction

The purpose of this master’s project was to learn stakeholder perceptions of the Maine Downtown Center (MDC). The intent of the MDC program evaluation was to discover perceptions of key stakeholders as interpreted as indicators of program effectiveness, focusing on responsiveness, consistency, open dialogue, and needs assessment. The Maine Downtown Center program is unique because it is a program that serves as a resource to another program, and I believe it functions more like an organization than a program. Because of this, I drew on literature that focused on stakeholder perceptions and non-profit organizational effectiveness.

The literature on non-profit organizational effectiveness is limited, confusing, and has had little progress theoretically (Forbes 1998; Herman & Renz 2004; Rojas 2000). There are two emergent theories in the literature, the social constructionist and multiple constituency models. For the purpose of my master’s project, I decided to follow the tradition of these two theories, both of which will be discussed in this literature review. As a result of examining pertinent literature of non-profit organizational effectiveness and the analysis of stakeholder perceptions discovered in the qualitative portion of this master’s project, I was able to generate recommendations that may assist Lori Allen,
program coordinator of the Maine Downtown Center in shaping stakeholder perceptions of organizational effectiveness.

The first section of this literature review will provide a brief history of the non-profit sector and use of business practices, issues of non-profit organizations using business practices, evaluating effectiveness and popular models, and a brief introduction of the multiple constituency and social constructionist models of organizational effectiveness. The second section of this literature review will discuss relevant literature using the multiple constituency and social constructionist models to explain strategic management practices of responsiveness, consistency, open dialogue, and needs assessments in shaping stakeholder perceptions.

Brief History of Non-Profits and Business Practices

The explosion of the non-profit industry in America is a fairly new occurrence, with a noticeable increase since the 1960’s (Hall 1990), and a growth rate of 80% since the mid-eighties (Jurkiewicz & Massey 1998). Traditionally, non-profit organizations have been managed with efforts of encouraging volunteerism and community-based collaborations to confront social ills (Bush 1992).

Non-profit organizations went through a major shift in management strategies and motivations during the Reagan Era. During the Reagan Administration, there were major cutbacks in federal spending in the social service sector. In efforts to compensate for the loss of these federally funded social services, the Reagan Administration encouraged the
public to engage in civic duty through volunteerism and financial support of non-profit organizations (Hall 1990).

This fundamental shift in responsibility for non-profit organizations to deal with society’s increasing social and economic ills resulted in a major increase in the number of non-profit organizations in the nation. The increase in non-profit organizations led to a shrinkage of available economic resources (Bush 1992). Because of the need for acquisition of scarce resources, non-profit organizations took on a more business-like approach to management (Bush 1992; Hall 1990).

Non-profit organizations were unconvinced that through the use of private funds they could fill the gap left by the federal budget cuts during the Reagan Era, but as Reagan had intended, non-profit organizations began to strategize and implement more business-like practices (Hall 1990). Because of the need to acquire scarce resources and increased responsibility to offer solutions to the nation’s growing social ills, non-profits were forced into a competitive market. The increased competition of non-profit organizations led to the adoption of more business-like practices (Bush 1992; Hall 1990). This next section will discuss some issues that non-profits have experienced as a result of adopting a more business-like approach to organization.

Issues with Non-Profit Organization and Business Practices

Bush (1992) studied the survival of the non-profit sector in the competitive for-profit world. He found through his own direct observations, experiences, and conversations with various key stakeholders in local non-profits, that all non-profits are
under the mounting pressure to adopt more business-like practices. According to Bush (1992) and Mirvis (1992), many non-profit executive directors are confronted with the mounting pressure to “act more like a business,” and make decisions that are economically focused rather than within the goals, values, or mission of an organization. The message that is sent to stakeholders is that the “bottom line” is more important than fulfilling the original mission and goals of the non-profit organization. Bush (1992) argued this pressure to adopt a business model for non-profits has sent a message to stakeholders that the organization is competitive rather than collaborative.

Bush stated that non-profit organizations can learn from the business model, but “there are inherent dangers in following blindly the growing belief that non-profits must be more businesslike in every sense of the word” (1992:392). He (1992) argued that because of the need to acquire scarce resources, it makes sense that a non-profit organization would like to look at business models to influence good management practices. Non-profit organizations that shift from traditional management practices to the business model “risk losing sight of the spirit of cooperation and participation traditional in the non-profit sector” (Bush 1992:392).

Hall (1990) argued that the increase in business-like practices into the non-profit sector inevitably leads to organizational conflict. In his case study of the Widget Museum, he looked at how one non-profit organization’s shift to using more business-like practices affected relationships within the non-profit organization. What he found was that those primarily motivated by volunteer spirit had conflict with stakeholders that
wanted to use a more self-interested business approach to organizational efficiency and effectiveness of the Widget Museum.

Hall (1990) used his case study of the Widget Museum and compared it to other non-profits with similar dialectical experiences. Based on his comparative analysis, he concluded that conflict is intrinsic to non-profits based on agendas that are altruistic and self-interested in nature. This intrinsic conflict is based on differing stakeholder interests and the struggles they have around interpreting the goals and mission of the non-profit organization. In order to overcome this conflict, Hall (1990) recommended that non-profit executive directors need to make sure organizational goals, values and mission are not ambiguous to stakeholders. This next section will discuss the emergent interest in determining criteria and models used to evaluate effectiveness.

Evaluating Effectiveness and Popular Models

Because of the boom in non-profit organizations and the shift of using more business practices for organizational effectiveness, there has been some confusion over how to analyze non-profit organizational effectiveness (Bush 1992). The issue of the dialects in non-profit organization’s traditional model and shift to the business model have increased interest in research that seeks to determine criteria of non-profit organizational effectiveness and ways of improving organizational effectiveness (Drucker 1990; Green & Griesinger 1996; Helmig, Bernd, Jegers, & Lapsley 2004).
Despite the emergence in interest of non-profit organizational effectiveness, literature continues to be limited. Some would argue that there are as many studies as there are models of organizational effectiveness (Herman & Renz, 1999; Sowa, Selden, & Sandfort 2004; Rojas 2000). Evaluating non-profit organizational effectiveness and developing criteria for organizational effectiveness are difficult because most measures have been developed for private, for-profit organizations. For example, “financial performance,” often a common indicator for private, for profit effectiveness, is not sufficient when looking at the effectiveness of not-for-profit entities (Holland 1988; Smith & Ce Shen 1996).

According to Sowa, et al. (2004) different scholars have used various models to determine non-profit organizational effectiveness. Some scholars have focused on internal organizational factors in determining criteria for effectiveness with focus on goals and the procedures for accomplishing these goals. Other scholars have focused on external organizational factors in determining criteria for effectiveness, such as an organization’s relationship with its environment. A third model that scholars have used are more contemporary approaches that use participant satisfaction in determining criteria for organizational effectiveness.

Some of the models that use internal organizational factors in determining criteria for effectiveness are the rational goal, purposive-rational, and the goal attainment models. These models make the assumption that organizations are intended to achieve both implicit and specified goals. According to these models, a non-profit organization’s
ability to meet its goals determines its level of effectiveness. (Green et al. 2001; Holland 1988; Sowa et. al. 2004). A problem with these models is that organizations typically have different stakeholders with different goals, some of which conflict with each other. Ambiguity of goals and values also makes application of these models problematic (Gruber 1986; Hall 1990; Holland 1988).

A model used by some scholars that focuses on external organizational factors in determining criteria for effectiveness is the systems resource model. The systems resource model focuses on an organization’s survival based on its ability to take advantage of its environment and acquire scarce and valuable resources. One of the issues with this model is that the criterion that determines effectiveness is focused most importantly on organizational inputs rather than outputs (Sowa, et. al. 2004).

Some scholars use participant satisfaction models in determining criteria for effectiveness. These models define organizational effectiveness based on an organization’s ability to satisfy key stakeholders. Models that use stakeholder satisfaction and perception of effectiveness are considered emergent approaches in determining criteria for non-profit organizational effectiveness. (Forbes 1998; Sowa et. al 2004; Zammuto 1984). Forbes (1998) defines “emergent” approaches as those that use non-conventional methods in measuring organizational effectiveness. One problem with using emergent approaches according to Herman and Renz (1999) is that people are often uncomfortable with the participant satisfaction conception of non-profit organization effectiveness.
According to Sowa, et. al. (2004) the research on non-profit organizational effectiveness shows that organizations are different. Using different criteria for determining effectiveness may be appropriate for different organizations. Forbes (1998) argues that using emergent approaches to determining criteria for organizational effectiveness is the most worth investigating.

The multiple constituency model and social constructionist perspective are two of the more popular participant satisfaction models in the current literature of emergent approaches to understanding non-profit organizational effectiveness (Forbes 1998; Herman and Renz 1998). Herman and Renz (2004) argue that these two contemporary perspectives are the most relevant when assessing non-profit organizational effectiveness.

Although external and internal criteria for determining effectiveness have had some popularity in the field of non-profit organizational effectiveness, they assume that organizations are stable, rational, and uniform (Holland 1987). The social construction perspective of stakeholder judgment of organizational effectiveness is not necessarily stable (Herman & Renz 2004). In attempting to offer recommendations that may shape the perceptions of stakeholders, one must believe that this is possible. This next section will provide a brief introduction to the multiple constituency and social constructionist models.

Multiple Constituency and Social Constructionist Models

According to the multiple constituency model of effectiveness, different stakeholders use different criteria to assess non-profit performance and organizational
effectiveness (Zammuto 1984). Therefore, different stakeholder’s expectations and judgments of organizational effectiveness vary depending on perceived responsiveness to the stakeholder’s expectations (Balser and McClusky 2005). Herman and Renz (1998) stated that the multiple constituency model of effectiveness categorizes stakeholders into these groups: clients, board members, staff, volunteers, and funders. Researchers and consultants must acknowledge the possible differences in interests of these different groups. “Organizational effectiveness is not a single reality, but a more complicated matter of differing interests and expectations” (Herman & Renz 2004:695).

Most of the literature on emergent themes about stakeholder perceptions and organizational effectiveness group together multiple constituency and social constructionist models of organizational effectiveness. The problem with this is that although both theories agree that stakeholder perceptions influence effectiveness, multiple constituency models differs from the social constructionist approach because they consider stakeholder criteria for measuring organizational effectiveness as stable and predictable (Forbes 1998; Herman & Renz 1998).

While social constructionism is not a new theoretical perspective in sociology, it is new to the analysis of non-profit organizational effectiveness (Forbes 1998; Herman & Renz 1997). Berger and Luckmann (1967) emphasized the significance of shared social realities created through actor construction and social interaction. According to Berger and Luckmann (1967), processes by which actions are repeated over time are given meanings by individual and others as institutionalization.
Reality, or some part thereof, is created by knowledge, beliefs, and actions of individuals through the process of social interaction (Benson 1981; Herman and Renz 2004). Through processes of social interaction and interpretation of meanings, actors develop criteria to assess organizational effectiveness according to the context of any given interaction (Balser and McClusky 2005). What this means is that stakeholders attach meanings and create criteria to assess performance based on the interactions they have with other stakeholders, and perceptions of effectiveness depend on whom you ask (Brown 2005, Herman & Renz 1997).

According to Berger and Luckmann (1967), patterns of social interaction are habitualized and the individual participating in the action is no longer aware that he or she is the creator of the actions in which he or she is involved. The actor thinks that both non-social and social processes are “just the way things are” (Berger and Luckmann 1967; Weick 1981). According to Herman and Renz (2005) “Reality is not independent of people though people may believe what they created exists independently” (p.695). In the final section of this literature review, I will discuss findings of relevant literature using the multiple constituency and social constructionist models that explain how management strategies can shape stakeholder perceptions.

Shaping Stakeholder Perceptions

According to Herman and Renz (2004), stakeholders judge the effectiveness of an organization based on different sets of criteria. Paid staff, board members, and funders base their perceptions of effectiveness on how well their own group interests are being
satisfied. This section looks at how stakeholder perceptions are shaped by management strategies that include responsiveness, consistency, open dialogue, and needs assessments.

Non-Profit Organizations and Responsiveness

Stakeholder judgments of organizational effectiveness are relatively unstable and therefore stakeholder relationships need to be monitored and managed. Stakeholder perceptions are based on how well their expectations are fulfilled. Multiple constituents may have expectations that sometimes conflict with those of the organization or that the organization cannot provide. These conflicts can be problematic as an organization attempts to be responsive (Balser & McClusky 2001; Ospina, Diaz, O’Sullivan 2002; Shoichet 1998).

At the very center of responsiveness is that organizations do not simply react to stakeholder expectations; rather, the organization balances responsiveness according to resource availability and priorities (Balser & McClusky 2001; Ospina, et. al 2002). Balser and McClusky (2001) in their study of stakeholder relationships and non-profit organizational effectiveness found that stakeholder perceptions were shaped by organizational responsiveness and the practices organizations used to manage stakeholder judgments.

Simply responding to the concerns of stakeholders is not enough to influence stakeholder perceptions of organizational effectiveness. Strategic management of stakeholder perceptions should involve the executive director guiding the stakeholder
expectations and how they evaluate organizational effectiveness (Balser & McClusky 2001; Oliver 1991; Ospina et. al. 2002).

Non-Profit Organizations and Consistency

An integral part of maintaining success of an organization is through satisfying the expectations of key stakeholders based on how they measure satisfaction (Borzaga & Tortia 2006; Bryson, Gibbons, & Shaye 2001). In order to understand stakeholder judgments of effectiveness, there needs to be continued attention and interaction. It is this interaction and attention that also shapes stakeholder perceptions of effectiveness and actions that will ultimately have an affect on the organization’s effectiveness (Bryson, et. al; Herman & Renz 1999).

Maintaining consistency in relationships with all stakeholders is important for maintaining similar information exchanged between stakeholders. As a result, one stakeholder will have similar experiences as another stakeholder, and this congruency in information exchanged is likely to influence perceptions that an organization is reliable and consistent. (Balser & McClusky 2005; Herman & Renz 1998). In their study of stakeholder relationships and non-profit organizational effectiveness, Balser and McClusky (2005) found that stakeholders that perceived their executive director as consistent in managing stakeholder relationships, also perceived the organization to be effective. They also found that stakeholders perceived those organizations with executive directors that were less consistent as less effective.
Consistency in managing stakeholder relationships improves stakeholder expectations of the organization. Predictability decreases stakeholder uncertainty and perceptions that the organization is not meeting their needs. Therefore, the more predictable an organization, the more stakeholders perceive the organization as effective (Balser & McClusky 2005).

Open Dialogue and Needs Assessments

According to Herman and Renz (1998) consistent open dialogue and needs assessments are management strategies that positively influence stakeholder perceptions of effectiveness. Herman and Renz (1998) in their study of more effective and less effective organizations found that performing and acting on regular needs assessments and evaluating stakeholder perceptions is important for an organization to run effectively. These needs assessments should look at performance criteria, measurements of outcome, and other social constructions that are eventually used as the basis of stakeholder judgments. Even though it may seem like an overwhelming task for an executive that feels like there is not enough time, creating open dialogue and external evaluation criteria to needs assessment is imperative to future organizational effectiveness.

Herman and Renz (2004) in their later panel study of effectiveness of local non-profit organizations, elaborated on their findings of their earlier study of more and less effective organizations. They maintain that it is important to have continued open dialogue with stakeholders whose perceptions of the organization are important. On-going dialogue between executives and stakeholders is crucial because it keeps
executives current to the criteria on which stakeholders are basing their judgments. If
dialogue is constructive, executives may be able to “inform and shape the expectations
stakeholders will use in future judgments of effectiveness” (Herman & Renz 2004:702).
Not performing on-going needs assessments and open dialogue leave stakeholders open
to divergent perceptions that may affect perceptions of organizational effectiveness.
“Sooner or later, this judgment will affect the availability of the political, financial, and
other resources essential to the organization’s survival” (Herman & Renz 1998:36).
CHAPTER III

METHODS

Beginning July 2006, I attended a series of meetings with Lori Allen, The Maine Downtown Center (MDC) Program Coordinator to review program organizational structure, discuss program evaluation focus, identify key stakeholders and determine the best data collection methods. We compiled a list of key stakeholders, which consisted of sixteen Maine Downtown Center Advisory Board Members and six Main Street Maine Downtown Managers. In August of 2006, I contacted all identified key stakeholders through e-mail, gave them background information about the objective of the program evaluation and my role as the principal researcher.

Beginning September 2006, following project approval from the Humboldt State University Internal Review Board, I phoned all identified key stakeholders to ask if they voluntarily agreed to participate in the MDC program assessment. Of the twenty-two who were contacted, thirteen MDC Advisory Board Members and six Main Street Maine Downtown Managers agreed to participate. While we preferred face-to-face interviews for data collection, I also gave the participants the choice of interviewing over the telephone. Fourteen of the participants agreed to face-to-face interviews and were scheduled to have interviews held at their business office or other agreed upon locations. All of the face-to-face interviewees gave consent to have the interviews recorded. Five of the participants were interviewed over the telephone and were not recorded. Telephone
interviews were conducted when it was geographically difficult to conduct face-to-face interviews or at the request of the participant.

Prior to all face-to-face interviews participants were informed of confidentiality, and provided written consent for the interview and the recording of the interview. Those that participated in telephone interviews were mailed written consent forms and were requested to mail or fax them back to me. I asked participants a series of open-ended questions that had been developed by Lori Allen. Questions were structured to give the participant opportunity to reflect on positive and negative attributes of the program, as well as offer ideas and solutions that may be integrated into possible changes. The last of the interviews was conducted in December of 2006.

I transcribed the recorded data from face-to-face interviews and written notes from telephone interviews. In order to maintain confidentiality, I used very limited identifiers. Instead of identifying the participant by gender and location, each was identified by position and assigned a number, such as “manager 1”, “manager 2”, and “board member 1”, “board member 2.” Sentences, phrases, and paragraphs (sets of meanings) were drawn from transcripts and then coded. The coded sets of meanings were put into groups and subgroups based on emergent thematic development. The program evaluation report prepared for the Maine Downtown Center and this master’s project is a result of these interviews and my analysis.
CHAPTER IV:
MDC PROGRAM EVALUATION

THE MAINE DOWNTOWN CENTER
Program Evaluation Report
Augusta, Maine
September-November 2006

Prepared by:
Sarah R. Barrington; Graduate Student
Department of Sociology
Humboldt State University
Arcata, CA 95521
# Table of Contents

Maine Downtown Center: A Brief Description ................................................................. 3
Methodology ......................................................................................................................... 4
Participant Demographics ...................................................................................................... 5
MDC Advisory Board .............................................................................................................. 6
  Board Member Roles and Effectiveness ........................................................................ 6
  Representation of the Board ............................................................................................ 6
Downtown Managers and Communication ....................................................................... 7
  Downtown Managers’ Disconnection from Board Members ........................................ 7
  How to Improve Communication .................................................................................. 7
Downtown Managers and Services .................................................................................... 8
  Past Services Received .................................................................................................... 8
  Service Deficiencies Compared to those in Other States ............................................. 8
  Desired Future Services .................................................................................................. 8
  Maine Council of Main Streets ...................................................................................... 9
  Year End Assessment ...................................................................................................... 9
Board Members and Services ............................................................................................ 10
  Start-up MSM communities .......................................................................................... 10
  Mature MSM communities ............................................................................................ 10
  Recruitment Criteria for New MSM Communities .................................................... 10
  Limiting MSM Communities ......................................................................................... 10
Maine Downtown Center: A Brief Description

The Maine Downtown Center was created in 2000 by the Maine State Legislature (LD 2600) to encourage downtown revitalization in the state of Maine and is a program of the Maine Development Foundation.

The Maine Development Foundation a private, non-profit corporation with an IRS 501 (c)(3) status and was created by the governor and legislature in 1978 to promote economic sustainability in the state of Maine.

The mission of the Maine Downtown Center is to promote community-based downtown development focused on business growth, cultural enhancement, economic development, housing revitalization, historic preservation, and job creation.

The Maine Downtown Center’s objectives are to provide training and technical assistance to willing and able communities that wish to revitalize their downtowns, promote and build awareness about importance of healthy downtowns, and serve as a point of contact for downtown development in the state of Maine.

In order to fulfill its mission it offers service on two levels. First, it serves as a resource to all downtowns in the state of Maine that have the desire to revitalize their downtowns. Second, the Maine Downtown Centers provides assistance to designated Main Street Maine communities.

The Main Street Maine Program was introduced by the Maine Downtown Center in 2001. Main Street Approach to Downtown Revitalization™ is an economic model established by the National Trust for Historic Preservation to promote traditional...
downtown revitalization with a focus on private-public partnerships and community support.

Main Street Maine communities are selected by the Maine Downtown Center through a statewide competitive process based on specific criteria related to a community’s willingness and ability to revitalize their downtowns. The application process is focused on broad-based community support, and requires that communities hire a professional downtown manager.
Methodology

Between September 2006 and November 2006, thirteen Advisory Board Members of the Maine Downtown Center (MDC) and six Main Street Maine (MSM) Downtown Managers participated in telephone or face-to-face interviews. Fourteen of the participants were interviewed onsite at their workplace offices; five of the participants were interviewed over the telephone. Telephone interviews were conducted when it was geographically difficult to conduct face-to-face interviews or at the request of the participant.

The participants were asked a series of questions developed by Lori Allen, MDC Program Coordinator, to gain a general understanding of opinions on the functioning and future of MDC. This report is a result of an analysis those interviews and the author’s observations of the program.
Demographics

MDC Advisory Board

The MDC Advisory Board Members (board members) who participated in this program evaluation are located throughout the state of Maine representing several professional areas: business (4), consulting (2), engineering (1), non-profit (2), state agencies (1) and others (3). Of those interviewed, nearly half had served on the board for 4 or more years, with almost all others having served on the board for 2-3 years.

MSM Downtown Managers

The Main Street Maine Downtown Managers (downtown managers) who participated in this program evaluation had educational backgrounds ranging from high school diplomas to master’s degrees. Two-thirds of the downtown managers had a bachelor’s degree or higher and half of the managers had received additional certification. Prior to becoming a downtown manager, almost all had management experience. Other experiences included teaching, third world development, state planning, building renovations, and a “variety of other odds and ends jobs.” Of those interviewed, one-third had been a downtown manager for 1-2 years, half for 3-4 years, and only one participant had served as a downtown manager for 5 or more years.
Maine Downtown Center Advisory Board

Board Member Roles and Effectiveness

The board members and downtown managers were asked about the role and effectiveness of the MDC Advisory Board. Less than half of the board members felt what was expected of them was “just right,” and almost two-thirds felt that MDC needed to ask more of them. A majority of the board members (including those that said “just right”) felt that MDC should take advantage of their special areas of expertise. One board member explained how MDC needs to utilize board members: “They really need to focus on individual talents and getting the most of what we have to offer, otherwise we are not interested in necessarily doing more.”

Board members and downtown managers felt the exact role of the board needed to be assessed and clearly defined, with specific consideration to how much power and input the board has in operational decision making. Some board members and downtown managers felt MDC needs to review advisory board bylaws, with particular attention to term limit guidelines.

A majority of the board members questioned whether they should be a board of directors or “simply” an advisory board. When asked about how MDC could make serving on the advisory board a better experience for members, one board member said: “The fact that it’s an advisory board rather than a board of directors suggests that it has less value and advice is as far as it goes.” Another board member said: “There is an issue
of whether its an advisory board or board of directors capacity…because the board is considered only an advisory board, this leads to frustration from time to time.”

Representation of the Board

The board members were asked what other member representation they would like to see on the board. While one board member felt the advisory board currently has the right mix, the other board members suggested the need for representation from the healthcare sector, fundraising and trade associations, the state legislature (either house or senate), building owners, developers, designers and architects involved in historic preservation, preservationists and more businesses.

Some of the board members felt that the Advisory Board should not be heavy on government or agency participation. One board member said “There is an issue with so many state agencies represented on the board because they first have an allegiance to their state agency and it is hard for them to identify with the needs of MDC and their attendance lacks.” Another board member stated, “there is no real feel of commitment with state agencies.”
Downtown Managers and Communication

Downtown Managers’ Disconnection from Board Members

Downtown managers were asked if they felt comfortable contacting board members if they had an issue with the program or were in need of board member expertise. Only a few of the downtown managers said they felt comfortable contacting board members. Of the few that felt comfortable, most of them said it would be unlikely that they would go to the board first if they had an issue with the program or needed expertise. The downtown managers who would not contact board members gave several reasons for their reluctance: they were not certain which board members were current; they had no previous contact with board members; they were uncertain of the expertise of individual board members.

How to Improve Communication

The downtown managers were asked how they thought communication could be improved between the advisory board, MDC and downtown managers. Nearly all of the downtown managers felt that the advisory board was disconnected from the needs of MSM communities, and that MDC should consider having a downtown manager on the board. If unable to serve on the advisory board, downtown managers would like to have a representative of their group attending and participating in advisory board meetings. At the bare minimum, downtown managers would like access to regular minutes of advisory board meetings to stay updated and informed of advisory board activities.
One downtown manager said, “The advisory board needs to hear from the managers about what is going on, on the street, if they are going to set policy that is going to affect the program. The advisory board needs a sounding board because the managers know better than anyone what is going on.” Another downtown manager expressed her concern about the lack of cohesion between board members and downtown managers: “Our needs are not making it to the board…there is a lack of flow in communication. Where is the accountability?”
Downtown Managers and Services

Past Services Received

When downtown managers were asked about services they had received in the past, they reported resource team visits, board roles and responsibility training, Main Street approach training, design assistance, and various additional workshops.

A number of the managers raised attention to the successes MDC had with some of the services they have provided in the past. For example, one downtown manager said, “A couple of years ago, we were offered a market analysis toolbox kit…this was very helpful. It is outdated now, but we used it a lot.” Another downtown manager said: “We had an awesome training for design. [An architect out of Portland, Maine was hired]…His enthusiasm energized the committee. He gave basic knowledge and enthusiasm.”

Some downtown managers were concerned about the lack of technical training. They felt the workshops offered were repetitive. The downtown managers felt there had been instances where either the consultants sent into their communities, or workshops offered, had not always been worthwhile in the level of sophistication for the anticipated audience.

Service Deficiencies Compared to those in Other States

The downtown managers were asked to rate the level of services they are receiving from MDC compared to their peers in other states. Based on their experiences
attending the national Main Street conferences, most downtown managers felt the level of services was far below that of their peers. Most of the downtown managers identified that other states have a full-time state coordinator. MDC’s part-time state coordinator compromises the level of services given to MSM communities, according to downtown managers. Some downtown managers also felt that their lower level of service, compared to peers in other states, was due to the lack of interaction between downtown managers and the state coordinator. Needs were not being articulated, and downtown managers felt this created a deficiency in their needs being met.

Desired Future Services

The downtown managers were asked what types of services they would like to see provided by MDC in the future. The services downtown managers would like MDC to provide in the future included: state level architectural services, more workshops/speakers about the four-point approach, more experts, more specialized workshops, and support in the area of legislative advocacy issues. A couple of the managers would like to see MDC be more of a resource center for access to reference materials and to link managers to experts.

Downtown managers were frustrated because they felt they are expert resources that are not being called upon. One downtown manager said: “One thing MDC is not doing is calling its expert managers at this time to help with what is going on. I felt the managers are not really being considered the experts and we really are the experts in the state. It is not the boards or volunteers, because we are living and breathing it all.”
Maine Council Of Main Streets

The downtown managers were asked how they felt about the Maine Council of Main Streets and how the initiative could be improved. Most of the downtown managers thought the Maine Council of Main Streets initiative is redundant because it creates another meeting for already busy people to attend. Of the few downtown managers that thought it was a great concept, they felt these things could improve the initiative: leadership training, agenda-based meetings with clear goals, more collaborative input for meeting topics, and well-planned scheduling.

Year End Assessment

The downtown managers were asked how effective the year end assessments have been and how the process might be improved. Most of the downtown managers felt the year end assessments were a great opportunity for their communities to critique their own program and see the progress that has been made while identifying areas needing improvement. Nearly all of the downtown managers felt that the year end assessments could produce a lot of valuable information, especially when communities are able to compare themselves to other MSM communities. Most of the downtown managers felt MDC had been lacking in follow-up services and if MDC increased consistency in providing follow-up services, the year end assessment process might be improved.
Board Member and Services

Start-up MSM Communities

The board members were asked about services they would like to see provided to start-up MSM communities. Board members felt there was a need for more intensive design assistance and Main Street approach training with extra emphasis on preservation. They also felt that more intensive board roles and responsibilities training would be beneficial. A number of the board members felt MDC needed to document the services typically provided to start-up MSM communities, so start-up communities would have a comparative model on which to base their expectations and would be provided a clear understanding of available resources.

Mature MSM Communities

When asked about services to provide mature MSM communities, board members felt that in addition to on-going training and basic assistance, mature MSM communities needed more sophisticated and specific targeted assistance. The board members were also concerned with program momentum; specifically, they referenced issues of downtown board turnover and downtown manager and volunteer burnout. When discussing program momentum, one board member said: “When start-up and new, it’s easy to build up momentum. But how to maintain that momentum over time would probably be a good thing to provide for these communities.”

Both board members and downtown managers felt that both start-up and mature MSM communities could benefit from a process that creates a connection between
similar communities to share their ideas and experiences. The board members and downtown managers also felt there needed to be a formal mechanism for communities to request services.

Recruitment Criteria for New MSM Communities

Board members were asked if MDC were to actively recruit communities into the MSM program, what communities they felt should be priorities. Some managers felt that MDC should seek a balance in recruiting healthy and unhealthy communities, whereas some board members felt that MDC should focus on only recruiting communities that are in need of the most help. Other board members suggested MDC should actively recruit these types of communities: communities that have village centers, communities with historic aspects worthy of preservation and geographically significant communities.

Limiting MSM Communities

The board members were asked how many communities they thought the MSM program should support. In general, the board members did not specify a set number of communities. Some suggested a range between 20-30 MSM communities. Almost all board members felt that inclusion should be limited by the amount of available resources. One board member explained why it is important to consider available resources when determining how many communities that MSM should have: “The more [communities] the merrier. But we really need to pay attention to the amount of resources and not bite off more than we can chew…Realistically, one or two communities a year rather than five or six and do a sloppy job with a bad outcome.” Another board member said:
“Ideally [the number of communities] should not be limited to resources…if considering the resources we have, we are reaching our limit already.”

MDC Annual Downtown Conference

Divergence in Impressions of Conferences

The board members and downtown managers did not agree about the quality of the MDC Annual Downtown Conference. Overall, most of the board members felt the conferences were good or excellent. In contrast, a majority of the downtown managers felt the conferences were not helpful because they felt the conferences had the same material year after year. One downtown manager said: “For those of us that have gone year after year, you start to feel like if you go to one, you have gone to them all.” One manager did like the fact that MDC had changed its format by holding the conferences in smaller communities. Another downtown manager was positive about the conferences held in MSM communities. Hosting conferences in MSM communities gave attendees an opportunity to see first hand the successes of the MSM program.
Participant Suggestions to Improve Conferences

When the downtown managers and board members were asked how the conferences could be improved, these were the prevalent themes:

- MDC needs to have differentiated workshops both for beginners and for more sophisticated attendees. Some board members recommended that the topics for the breakout sessions could be more specific. For example, one board member said: “You could get as specific as to how you get excited about your brand.” Some of the downtown managers recommended that MDC bring in more experts. One downtown manager acknowledged that experts are expensive, but efforts should be towards quality over quantity. Another downtown manager thought that MDC should be more creative in utilizing the experts within the state of Maine.

- MDC needs to utilize resources when selecting presenters. A sentiment of board members and downtown managers, one board member said: “There has been a tendency to use some of the same people for presenters. There are a lot of people that are great resources and visionaries that haven’t been tapped into and would welcome the opportunity to present things.”

- MDC needs to strategize to increase conference attendance. Some of the board members felt attendance was higher when the conference was held in MSM communities. One reason that attendance may be higher when a MSM community hosts the conference according to one board member is “it inspires the excitement of seeing the program in action. The conference is diluted otherwise.” One downtown manager was concerned with the need for incentive to travel and stay the entire day and suggested that MDC “come up with flashy, attention-getting sessions.” Another downtown manager suggested that part of the problem with attendance could be a lack of timely notification for some prospective attendees.

Many downtown managers felt there needed to be improvements to conference planning. The downtown managers felt the conference could benefit from involving more people in the planning; specifically, there could be more input from more MSM communities. One downtown manager felt that every manager “could and should produce something [for the conference].”
Downtown Managers and Public Relations

Lack of Public Awareness for MDC and MDF

The downtown managers were asked if they thought their community residents were aware of MDC and MDF, and how they felt MDC was perceived in their community and statewide. Most of the downtown managers felt their community residents were not aware of MDC or MDF. The downtown managers felt there was some community awareness, but that awareness was limited to MDC. Some of the downtown managers felt that their community members had some skepticism about MDC.

Most of the downtown managers were unable to speculate about statewide perceptions of MDC, although some downtown managers felt that when other communities saw successful MSM communities, and discovered they were connected to MDC, MDC was perceived as beneficial.
The downtown managers were asked if they regularly credited MDC and MDF in their promotional materials and other information. Typically, the downtown managers did not credit MDF. Most of the downtown managers said they credited MDC when contextually appropriate. Nearly all of the downtown managers acknowledged some level of confusion with the MDF, MDC, and MSM connection for the general public. This is how one downtown manager explained how difficulties arise when trying to credit MDC and MDF in their publications and other information:

The people who are aware of our own MSM program are aware that we are under MDC. Making the connection to MDF is trickier. [It] isn’t because we purposely leave stuff out. When I am explaining our Main Street program to somebody, by the time I’ve explained to them that we are a designated Main Street Maine community by MDC, and that we are part of the national Main Street program…which is under the national trust, that is way too many things for people to grasp. And if you throw in MDC is a program of MDF, and the national Main Street program is connected to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, that is just too much.
Suggestions from the Advisory Board

Additional Programming

The board members were asked if MDC should develop additional programming aside from MSM. An overwhelming majority thought that MDC should not develop additional programming. The reasons board members gave for not developing additional programming was that MDC should focus on the organization and operation of MDC until there is more staffing and funding. MDC has more to do than it currently can accommodate. In addition to focusing on MSM, some of the board members felt MDC should also be a resource for not only MSM, but also for downtowns striving to become MSM communities, and for downtowns not interested in the MSM model, but interested in downtown revitalization.

Building Relationships with Other Groups and Organizations

The board members were asked which other groups or organizations should be the focus of MDC relationship building. All of the board members had suggestions. Some of the board members emphasized the importance of relationship building between like groups, which decreases redundancy and dilution of the program. A number of the board members thought that MDC was already exemplifying healthy networking. For example, MDC has maintained a good relationship with GrowSmart Maine.
This is a list of the groups and organizations that the board members recommended:

- Banker Associations (Especially community banks)
- Business Associations
- Businesses
- Chambers of Commerce
- Coastal Enterprises, Inc.
- Community Development Entities
- Conservationists
- Eastern Maine Development Entities
- Environmental Groups
- Friends of Midcoast Maine
- GrowSmart Maine
- Institute for Self-Reliance
- Land for Maine’s Future
- Legislature
- Local Historical Associations
- Maine Association of Realtors
- Maine Community Foundation
- Maine Economic Growth Council
- Maine Historic Preservation Commission
- Maine Mountain Heritage
- Maine Municipal Association
- Maine Preservation
- Maine Real Estate and Development Association
- Maine Service Centers Coalition
- Municipalities
- Regional Council of Governments (COGs)
- Residential Associations
- State Agencies
- State Planning Office
Board Member Concerns and Priorities for MDC

Board members identified key concerns and priorities for MDC work:

- MSM is a top MDC priority and concern for nearly all of the board members. According to board members, MDC needs to focus on existing MSM communities so they can continue to develop. MDC also needs to find a balance between supporting existing MSM communities and recruiting new MSM communities. MDC needs to increase a wider promotion and degree of implementation of MSM principles and increase legislative support of MSM. Some recommendations from board members are focusing on reaching critical mass, expanding membership base, and having a higher integration with other community development entities.

- Financial Sustainability is a top priority of MDC for the majority of board members, and the primary concern for all of the board members, specifically in regards to political climate, staffing, program expansion, and ability to maintain current MSM communities. All of the board members stated at the bare-minimum, MDC needed to have a fulltime position for the MSM state coordinator. Some board members suggest that MDC look to non-state for support of program, move issue of community revitalization into legislation and use the Brookings-GrowSmart Maine Report\(^1\) as a resource.

- Program Organizational Structure is a concern for some of the board members. The board members question whether location of MDC should remain a permanent program of MDF. Some of the board members would like to see MDC a self-sustained separate entity from MDF with a board of directors.

Recommendations

These recommendations are based on the themes that developed through participant responses and the observations of the author of this report. Page numbers follow each recommendation so the reader can locate the participant perceptions that were the foundation of these recommendations:

• Reassess and redefine roles and responsibilities of the board (pgs. 6, 16)
• Utilize volunteer and paid staff expertise and talents (pgs. 6, 8, 12)
• Implement management strategies that encourage communication between key stakeholders (pg. 7, 10)
• Identify and provide valuable services based on specific needs of individual MSM communities (pg. 8)
• Identify standards of service of successful peers in other states and reference these models for services provided to MSM communities. (pg. 8)
• Strengthen the Maine Council of Maine Streets initiative by reassessing and defining purpose/goals (pg. 9)
• Implement consistent follow-up practices with year end assessments (pg. 9)
• Limit expansion of MSM communities based on adequate resources (pg. 11)
• Establish formal mechanisms for MSM communities to connect with other MSM communities (pg. 10)
• Document services and create a comparative model for start-up MSM communities to gauge expectations (pg. 10)
• Formulate a long-term plan of how MDC accommodates MSM communities as they transition from start-up to maturity (pg. 10)
• Develop workshops and training sessions to accommodate both beginners and sophisticated stakeholders (pgs. 8, 12)
• Organize a plan to raise public awareness, support, and participation (pgs. 12, 14)
• Build meaningful relationships with affinity groups and organizations (pg. 15)
• Increase legislative attention and support (pg. 16)
• Seek alternative funding streams (pg. 16)
• Reassess whether MDC should be a separate entity from MDF (pg. 16)
• Strategize to fulfill the perceived need for a fulltime MSM State Coordinator (pgs. 8, 16)²

² The page numbers in this recommendations portion are for the actual MDC Program Evaluation Report and not accurate for this written report for my field placement.
CHAPTER V: PLACEMENT DISCUSSION

Introduction

This project was one of the first field placements of the Master’s Practicing Sociology Program at Humboldt State University performed outside of Humboldt County. This chapter discusses how and why this placement at the Maine Development Foundation came into fruition, the unique challenges and benefits that accompanied an out-of-area placement, and recommendations for future out-of-area placements based on what I learned from my experience.

Brief History of Placement

As a result of a series of discussions about out-of-area field placements with Dr. Mary Virnoche, program coordinator of the practicing sociology track at Humboldt State University and through networking with an alumnus of the University of Maine, it was determined that an out-of-area field placement was feasible. I received my bachelor’s degree at the University of Maine and during undergraduate studies I fell in love with the state, its geography, people, and history. I decided while at the University of Maine that I would like to live and work in Maine, but like other young people living in rural communities, I was concerned with issues of job acquisition and economic sustainability. Maine is primarily made up of rural communities, and like other rural areas, it experiences the loss of its young and educated seeking more financially prosperous lives.
In fall of 2005, I discovered that an out-of-area placement was possible and began to research potential placement locations in the state of Maine. Because of my alumnus status of the University of Maine, I was able to access professional networks with other alumni. Rick Redmond, a journalism alumnus, worked as an assistant scheduler to Governor John Baldacci. One of the issues the Maine State Legislature was working on was the problem of the “brain drain”. The Maine Development Foundation had a program called Realize!Maine that had the primary goal of attracting and retaining young professionals through a focus on culture, jobs, housing, and creative economy. Through conversations with Rick Redmond about the Realize!Maine program, I became extremely excited about the possibility of working with the Maine Development Foundation. As a result of these conversations, my efforts to contact Kevin Thurston, program coordinator of Realize!Maine, were set into motion. Rick Redmond made the preliminary contact for me with Kevin Thurston and the Maine Development Foundation. By March of 2006 an interview was secured.

I flew out to Maine in March of 2006 to meet with Kevin Thurston at the Maine Development Foundation in Augusta, Maine. In April of 2006, Laurie Lachance, President of the Maine Development Foundation phoned me to let me know that they welcomed the opportunity to collaborate on a mutually beneficial project. My original interest in working with the Realize!Maine program was hampered, as the program had been stagnant for close to two years. The Maine Development Foundation felt a greater need for my services with the Maine Downtown Center.
In May of 2006, the Maine Development Foundation requested that I perform a program evaluation of the Maine Downtown Center. At this time, Lori Allen, program coordinator of the Maine Downtown Center, contacted me and we began to discuss logistics of the project over the phone and through e-mail communications. We decided that preliminary onsite work would begin in July of 2006. During this preliminary onsite work, activities included a series of staff meetings, background research, contact of prospective participants, and discussions regarding appropriate methods for this project.

In August of 2006, stakeholders were contacted through phone calls and e-mails to begin scheduling appointments for interviews. Interviews with stakeholders were to be held at their business office or other agreed upon locations. Stakeholders were located throughout the state of Maine with the furthest 250 miles away. I mapped out each participant based on location, travel time, mileage, and anticipated length of interview. Because I had organized stakeholders by location, travel time, mileage, and length of interview, it was not too difficult to schedule meetings with stakeholders located in similar geographic areas. All of the interviews and transcribing for this project were completed between September 2006 and December 2006. In January 2006, I returned to Humboldt State University to prepare the Maine Downtown Center program evaluation report under the direction of my thesis chair and committee.

Challenges

There were inconsequential challenges that arose as a result of this out-of-area field placement. First, I was not able to have direct access to on-campus resources such as
day-to-day interactions with professors and other students. This disconnect did not dramatically hinder the processes of this project, but I think is definitely worth noting. This disconnect is worth noting because without professor/student or student/student interactions, I was not able to “bounce” my ideas off of others, or have others bounce their ideas off of me. I firmly believe these social interactions are imperative to the formulation of ideas and schemes that could have been useful to this project. Second, having to determine how much time to spend in Maine for onsite activities proved to be a challenge. When I began my field placement, the Maine Development Foundation and I were fully aware that I would be available for onsite activities for a set amount of time. We did our best to establish which stakeholders were most relevant to this project. We were both interested in extending this project to include other various stakeholders and because of the limited time, we had to narrow the scope. Finally, during the emergent theme development process, it would have been beneficial to have further access to participants of the program evaluation for additional questioning if needed, although having a local field placement would not guarantee further access to participants. Most of the challenges that were the result of geographic distance were compensated for through telephone and Internet technology. I will discuss this further in the recommendations section of this chapter.

Benefits

The benefits of this out-of-area field placement considerably outweighed the challenges. First of all, with an out-of-area field placement the scope of choices to apply
sociology is limitless. Humboldt County is a rural area that does not accommodate all sociological and personal interests.

Having access to an outside of the area placement is beneficial to the student as well as the field of applied sociology in general. I came to Humboldt State University because it has one of the few graduate programs in the country that have a focus on applied sociology. What I have learned about applied sociology is that it has relevancy in almost any field. When seeking out a placement for this master’s project, it became very clear to me that I could apply sociology in ways that I had not previously been aware.

Second, there is potential to network with agencies and professionals in preparation for a future career. Working with organizations and professionals in a particular geographic location can also be beneficial for future professional networking. Many of the participants of this master’s project gave me their contact information and encouraged me to return to Maine to offer my services to a state they loved.

Third, skills learned in other communities benefit Humboldt County and other students that attend Humboldt State University. The experience gained by having a placement in an organization that is unlike those located in Humboldt County only enhances knowledge disseminated to other students that have local field placements. As a result of this out-of-area placement, I was able to share my experiences with undergraduates and graduates in coursework class discussions.

Finally, an out-of-area field placement not only gives exposure to the Master’s Program in Practicing Sociology at Humboldt State University, but also generates
legitimacy for the field of applied sociology through solving practical problems in real world settings beyond the scope of affiliations established by Humboldt State University.

Recommendations

One of the biggest challenges of this out-of-area field placement was that I was unable to have day-to-day interaction with professors and students. Using the Internet and telephone can alleviate this challenge if the student has a strong social network. I would recommend that prior to leaving for an out-of-area field placement, students create an extensive contact list. Other than my committee chair, Mary Virnoche and a couple of graduate peers, I was “out there” on my own. It would have served me tremendously to have created a stronger social network before leaving the area.

Second, I would recommend having a clearly defined project before arrival to an onsite location. A fair amount of initial time-spent onsite was focused on setting project guidelines and designing methods rather than in actually doing the project. Although communicating through the internet or telephone may not have the same benefits as face-to-face interaction, it is safe to assume that most of the preliminary details can be established through these modes of communication.

Third, I recommend requesting as much information about your organization before onsite placement begins. My organization had a reasonably extensive website, but most of the materials that were beneficial to this master’s project were located in the onsite resource collection.
Finally, I recommend that only students that have success working independently consider an out-of-area field placement. Because the Maine Development Foundation and participants of the Maine Downtown program evaluation did not have an established relationship or familiarity with Humboldt State University, it took a lot of initiative for all parties to move through the process with confidence. A student that prefers a lot of guidance would not be well suited for an out-of-area field placement. Overall, if my recommendations are taken into consideration, I believe that out-of-area field placements can be successful for all invested parties.
CHAPTER VI:
REFERENCES


