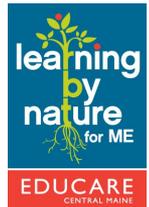




# The Impact of COVID-19 on Maine Environmental Education and Outdoor Learning Organizations



# Today's Presenters



**Olivia Griset,**  
Executive Director  
<https://www.meeassociation.org/>



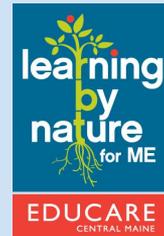
**Nathan Broaddus,**  
Manager  
<http://www.nbeconsortium.com/>



**Ruth Kermish- Allen**  
Executive Director  
<https://mmsa.org/>



**Ryder Scott, Board Member**  
<https://ellms.org/>



**Laura Newman, Coordinator**  
<https://www.educarecentralmaine.org/lbynforme>

# Presentation Overview

## “Keeping the Momentum”

- Environmental education and outdoor learning provide essential values for youth
- National survey data on COVID-19 impacts on Environmental and Outdoor Science Education
- Maine survey by 5 state organizations in collaboration showing local impacts
- Impacts over short, medium, and long term predictions and how the field is adapting
- How to support environmental education and outdoor learning

Every Kid, Every Day, Every Way  
The benefits of environmental and outdoor learning  
cross many landscapes, many subjects, and many ages.



### Rural, Open Lands, and Urban Spaces

- 1 Knowledge gains across multiple disciplines, including environmental issues, science, mathematics, and more
- 2 Emotional and social skills, such as self-esteem, character development, team work, and leadership skills
- 3 Environmentally friendly behavior, such as reducing water use, increasing recycling, and participating in community cleanups
- 4 Academic skills (21st Century skills), such as critical thinking, oral communication, analytical skills, problem solving, and higher-order thinking
- 5 Motivation to learn, including enthusiasm for and interest in school
- 6 Civic interest and engagement, including feelings of civic responsibility, feelings of empowerment, and ability to take action

### Education We Need for the World We Want

NAAEE and its 56 Affiliate organizations form the largest network of environmental educators in the country, connecting us to over 150,000 educators annually. Together, we are a driving force for creating a more environmentally literate citizenry through education. We have been working together for decades to build a robust and dynamic community of EE professionals and partners who understand the value and power of EE to ensure an equitable, sustainable, and vibrant world.



MAINE  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
EDUCATION  
ASSOCIATION

# Census for Community-Based Environmental Learning

## WHAT?

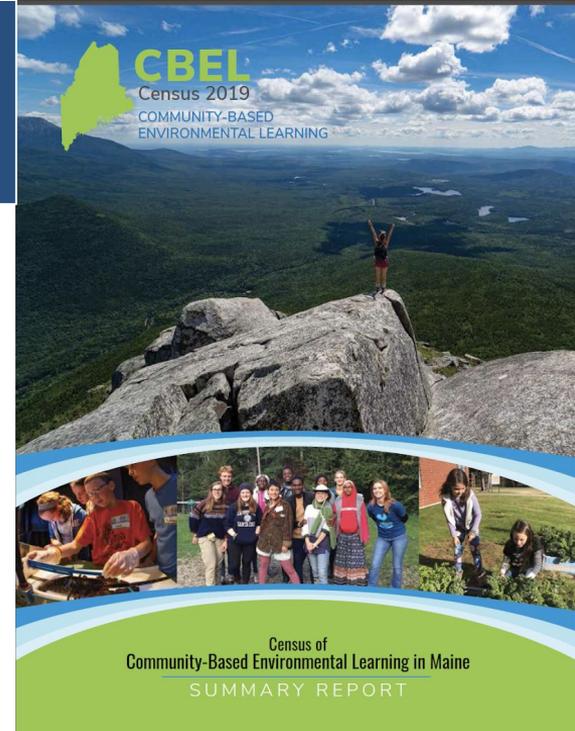
- Partnership between the Maine Math and Science Alliance and the Maine Environmental Education Association

## WHY?

- To provide baseline information about all that is happening across the EE sector in Maine

## WHO?

- Targeting K-12 schools and community/EE organizations (libraries, nature centers, camps, land trusts, etc.)



# Where CBEL Projects Are

Percent of Projects Compared  
with Percent State Population by County

## Representation by County

- Overrepresented
- Underrepresented
- Representative



# Where CBEL Orgs Are

Responding Organizations  
Serving Youth by County

## MOST SERVED COUNTIES

- 27% Cumberland
- 16% Knox
- 13% York

## LEAST SERVED COUNTIES

- 5% Somerset
- 5% Piscataquis
- 4% Franklin



# “A Field at Risk: The Impact of COVID-19 on Environmental and Outdoor Science Education” National Survey and Policy Brief

According to a recent [policy brief](#) released by UC Berkeley’s Lawrence Hall of Science,  
**By Dec. 31, 2020:**

- 11 million kids who would have been served by 1,000 organizations will have missed environmental and outdoor science learning opportunities. 60% of them are from communities of color or low income communities.
- \$600M in lost revenue from 1,000 organizations
- 30,000 employees laid off or furloughed from 1,000 organizations
- 30% of organizations nationally are highly unlikely to reopen
- Over 1/3 of the outdoor education field (up to 65%) is likely to disappear, eroding a key component of the nation’s education infrastructure

# Maine's COVID-19 Survey Goal



To gain a deeper understanding of how COVID-19 impacts organizations providing environmental and outdoor education in Maine through summer 2020

We know nonprofits and organizations are a key component of the environmental learning sector in Maine, supporting youth and adults, both in-school and out-of-school.

The sample of organizations who responded to the recent Census of Community-Based Environmental Learning in Maine reported that collectively, each year, serve between 60,000-100,000 youth across grades K-12.

# COVID-19 Survey Sample

- 84 organizational responses
  - Responses from organizations serving every county in the State
  - 35% of organizations reported they serve youth statewide
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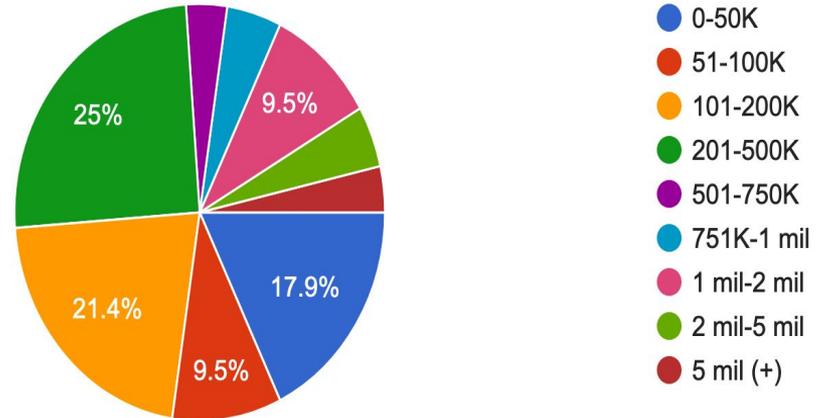


## Annual Budgets

74% of the reporting organizations have annual budgets less than \$500,000

What is your organization's annual operating budget?

84 responses

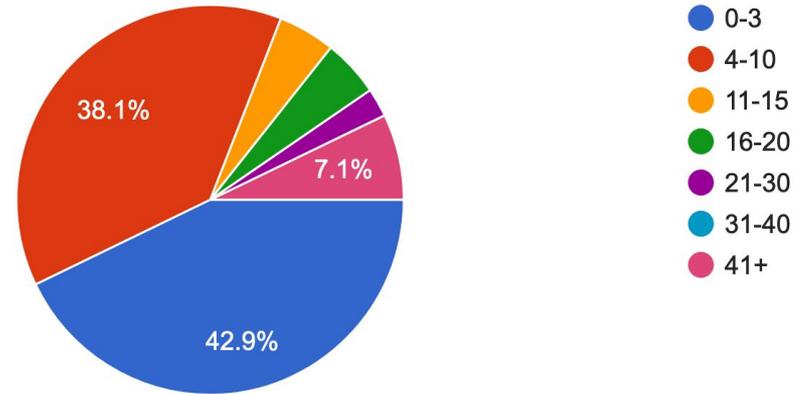


# Year Round Staffing

81% of organizations have 10 or fewer full or part time year round staff

Number of full-time and year-round part time staff at your organization

84 responses



# COVID Impacts: Fee-For-Service Youth Programs

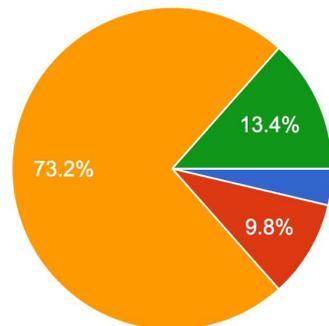
Fee-for-Service in-person programs with youth have been a **primary source of income for 43% of organizations.**

**73% of organizations WILL NOT be running fee-for-service youth programs this summer.**

**Only 4% of organizations will run a full schedule of fee-for-service, in-person programs.**

Will you be running Fee-for-Service in-person youth programming this summer?

82 responses



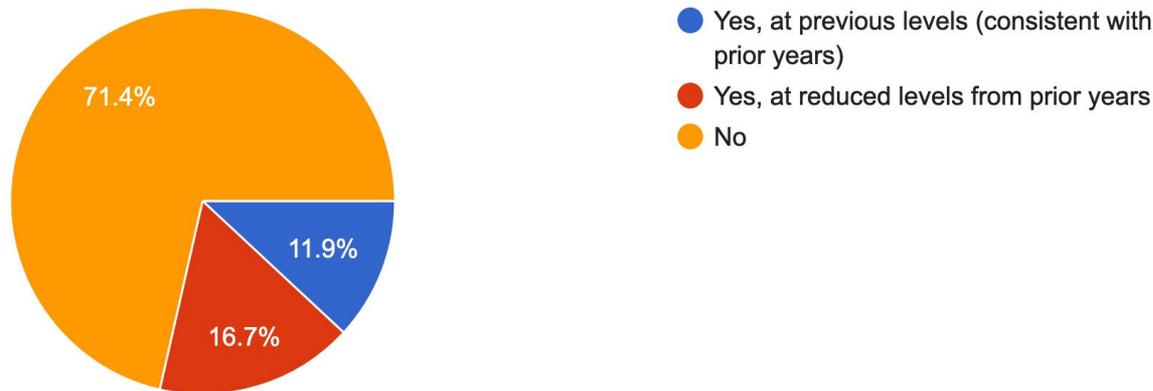
- Yes, at our full schedule
- Yes, with a reduced schedule and number of participants
- No
- We do not know yet

# Short-Term COVID-19 Impacts on Summer Employment:

**Only 12% of organizations will be bringing on their usual number of summer staff and 71% of organizations will NOT be hiring summer staff.**

Will you still be bringing on seasonal education staff this summer?

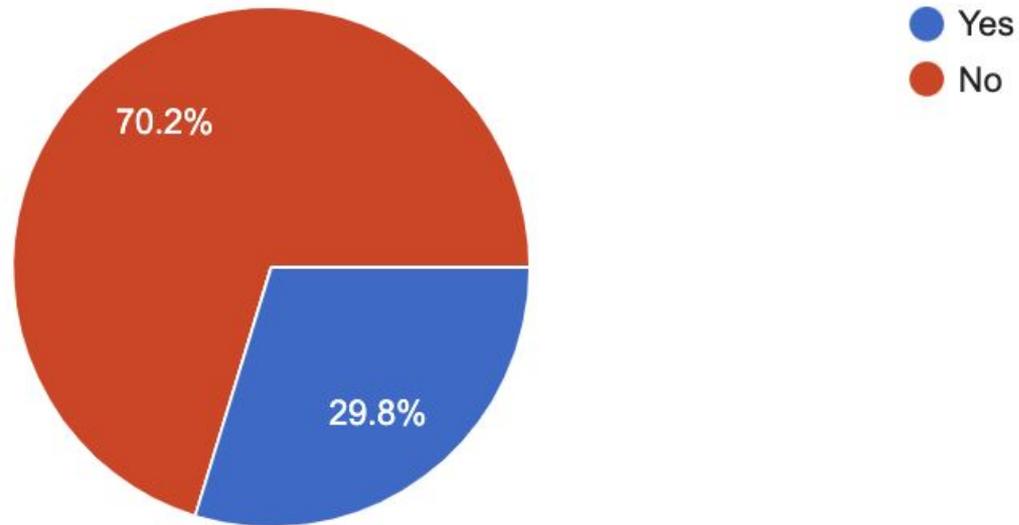
84 responses



# Long-Term COVID-19 Impacts on Staffing:

**30% of organizations will face significant layoffs by fall 2020**

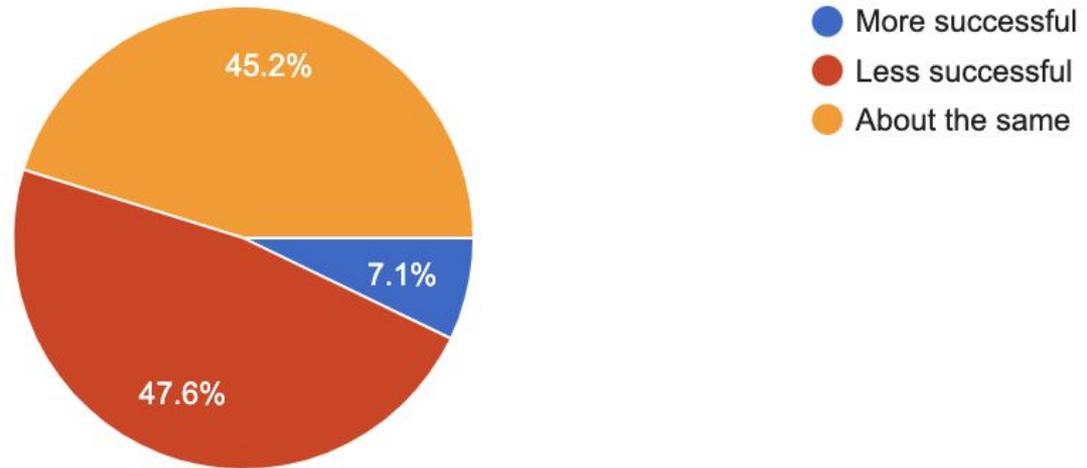
Will your organization face significant layoffs by Fall 2020 due to COVID-19?



# COVID Impacts: 2020 Fundraising Efforts

Almost 50% of organizations have had a **LESS** successful year fundraising

Compared to this time last year, organizations responded that their fundraising efforts were...



# Federal Aid: Payroll Protection Program (PPP) Access



**69% of Organizations applied for the PPP; 96% of those received PPP funds**

Those who didn't apply for the PPP cited the following reasons:

- They didn't qualify (42%)
- It was too complicated a process (8%)
- Didn't know about it (4%)
- Didn't have an opportunity to pull together an application (4%)
- Other reasons (46%)

# Federal Aid Sources: Other than PPP



11% of organizations received another form of Federal Aid

Other federal aid sources included:

- Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) and loan advance (50%)
- Unemployment
- Family leave (FFCRA)

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# Long-Term COVID-19 Impacts



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Impacts if COVID-19 restrictions continue for the next 6-12 months:

- **Reduction of programming and associated revenue (83%)**
- **Layoffs of seasonal and entry-level staff (36%)**
- **Layoffs of senior staff and program leaders (29%)**
- **Termination of operations (10%)**

12% of organizations reported no significant impacts on staffing or revenue generation if COVID-19 restrictions continue

# Environmental Education Program Adaptations:

Organizations in Maine have been adapting their programming to meet current constraints and needs in creative ways including:

- Virtual live programming (51%)
- Virtual recorded programming (51%)
- Blogs with nature-based education ideas (32%)
- New printable content for schools and families (26%)
- Coaching/support for educators (20%)
- Take-home outdoor learning kits (17%)



# How Can We Support This Critical Field at Risk?



**50% of organizations responded that their top priority for support would be operating support grants. These will become even more critical post-PPP support.**

Other top priorities for support included:

- Convening conversations about how outdoor learning may play a bigger role in public education
- Training/convening conversations about how to safely re-open and provide in-person programming
- Sharing new revenue generation ideas
- Sharing the stories of the new content and materials organizations are creating
- Convening a Virtual EE summit to generate equity-centered solutions
- Training on how to best virtualize programs

# How Can We Support This Critical Field at Risk?

We know access to environmental education and outdoor learning is critical for all -- but in some communities a single provider is both crucial and at risk. We must prioritize support to preserve Maine's existing network of providers, including those serving youth from historically marginalized populations and in underserved regions of the state



# Final COVID Impact Themes:



EE Organizations are collaborating more than ever in this crisis and have pivoted to create high quality virtual and home/self guided content--which is not easily monetized

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Outdoor engagement has increased

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PPP has somewhat stabilized the field through June but there will be a significant impact from reductions in fee-for-service in person programming.

# Final COVID Impact Themes:



High need for clear information and rules on how to safely operate programs. Great uncertainty around Fall school-based programming.

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Recognizing families as a critical environmental education and outdoor learning population

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Inequities exacerbated

## Questions and Contact Info:

For information about the survey please contact:

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Thank you to the following Maine organizations for their collaboration and rapid response on this project!

