

Introduction

Successful heritage areas are a strong grassroots coalition involving local residents, organizations, and non-profits groups in the operations and activities of the heritage area. In addition, local governments, corporations, and foundations need to be committed to the concept and the work of the heritage area and invest in its work. As the legislative mission of the IMCNHC is diverse, the interests and expertise of the people involved need to be diverse as well. As the ideal is to involve many people in many different ways and projects, communication between those involved and with others in the region becomes very important. Local investment is necessary to match the federal investment and a diversification of funding is critical to the long-term sustainability of the work of the IMCNHC. The collective activities and accomplishments of the IMCNHC need to be recorded, evaluated, and celebrated.

This section of the plan identifies all aspects of the implementation phases:

- Ways to communicate within the IMCNHC coalition and to other stakeholders
- Core activities that are required and/or desirable for the IMCNHC operations
- Ways to successfully coordinate all activities that support the mission and vision of the IMCNHC
- How IMCNHC projects will be identified and chosen over the life of this plan
- A strategy toward finding the local investment required
- Ways to evaluate the progress toward the goals of the IMCNHC legislation
- Strategies for the sustainability of IMCNHC activities and projects after 2021

Figure 6.1. Communications

Strategy: The Canal Alliance will communicate effectively in the Canal Alliance and with other stakeholders through a variety of ways.

Communications Plan

Introduction

The authorizing legislation of the Illinois & Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor (IMCNHC) requires the Canal Corridor Association (CCA) to “increase public awareness of and appreciation for the natural, historical, and architectural resources and sites in the corridor.” This section outlines how the public will increasingly become aware of the heritage corridor’s unique assets and become involved in the work of the Corridor, thus in the implementation of the plan.

Outcomes of the Communications Plan

- To engage more people in increasingly intense ways within the IMCNHC
- To routinely communicate within the Canal Alliance to maintain sustained support across the IMCNHC
- To support an Canal Alliance community so that Canal Alliance members are enhanced by becoming more aware of all the activities within the Corridor

Outcomes Target

The communications plan targets three different audiences: the Canal Alliance, potential Canal Alliance members, and partners, residents, and visitors to the IMCNHC.

Methods of Civic Engagement

The plan considers methods for one-way information sharing with a wide audience and how to facilitate two-way communication between all stakeholders and Canal Alliance members.

Through the planning process, the Canal Corridor Association asked our stakeholders how they would prefer to receive information about the various activities and programs of the IMCNHC.

The vast majority agreed that email was the preferred method of communication, as long as the emails were not sent too often. Potential Canal Alliance members expressed the desire to come together as a community to allow for conversation and information exchange.

The communication methods used to inform stakeholders may need to be adapted as technology changes. Our goal is to remain flexible and take advantage of emerging technologies to more effectively connect with and between Canal Alliance members and other IMCNHC stakeholders.

Figure 6.2. Civic Engagement

Civic engagement is a continuous, dynamic conversation with the public on many levels that reinforces public commitment to the preservation of heritage resources, both cultural and natural, and strengthens public understanding of the full meaning and contemporary relevance of these resources.

National Park Service Director's Order 75A: Civic Engagement and Public Involvement, 2003

While the primary strategy for communication utilizes the Internet, it is understood that not everyone is on-line. To accommodate individuals without Internet access, paper copies of our materials will be provided for free or for a minimal fee.

The following is an overview of the communication methods proposed to engage our stakeholders. The methods have been divided into three categories of communication: face-to-face, electronic, and traditional. This is meant to be a starting point, not a complete list.

Electronic Communications

IMCNHC Website

A website is currently the single most important electronic tool to assist in engaging the public and increasing awareness of the IMCNHC. It is an effective avenue to keep the public and the Canal Alliance abreast of the implementation process, and inform stakeholders of the various activities and sites within the heritage corridor. It allows the IMCNHC to engage a diverse audience in a multitude of ways by providing the information necessary for visiting the heritage corridor, recreating, and participating in the activities and programs offered throughout the IMCNHC. It also provides a communications channel to share resources for the Canal Alliance, educators, and children. It can also solicit and gather feedback from stakeholders, including the general public, visitors to the Corridor, students, and special interest groups.

The website will include resources for stakeholders to get involved and invest, including signing up for email and mailing lists, volunteer opportunities, and information to join the Canal Alliance.

The Canal Corridor Association will coordinate and maintain the IMCNHC website. Canal Alliance members will be able to submit/post upcoming events on the IMCNHC website. By linking the IMCNHC website with other websites within the Canal Alliance, a broader audience will be reached and increase awareness of the heritage corridor. The site also will be linked to the appropriate pages on the National Park Service website.

Other Websites

A broader audience will be reached by posting various events, activities, and programs of the IMCNHC on a variety of websites, both within and outside the Canal Alliance.

E-news to IMCNHC distribution list

Based upon research within the IMCNHC, the preferred

Figure 6.3 IMCNHC Website Suggestions

Visit Section

- *Visitor information*
- *Recreation information*
- *Upcoming events*
- *Children's activities*
- *Links to key sites*

Learn Section

- *IMCNHC history*
- *Information for educators*
- *Volunteer Opportunities*
- *Investment Opportunities*

Canal Alliance Section

- *Information for new Canal Alliance members*
- *Canal Alliance Pledge*
- *Training opportunities*
- *Downloadable forms*
- *Tool kits*

communication channel is email when providing information about public participation opportunities and events. CCA has developed an email distribution list of approximately 1000 people who have expressed interest in the IMCNHC. The email distribution list will be built by providing the following opportunities for stakeholders to be added:

- Including an invitation to be added to this list at the end of all appropriate correspondence
- Including an invitation to be added to this list at the end of all press releases
- Including an invitation to be added to this list at the end of all e-news issues
- A sign-up for the email distribution list on the IMCNHC website
- A sign-up list at meetings and events

Email will be used to share information, including notifying stakeholders when new material is posted to the website, sharing summaries of meetings, inviting people to come to upcoming workshops or trainings, and requesting feedback after events or trainings (i.e., comment and evaluation forms).

Email also allows CCA to receive feedback and new information from stakeholders, which allows for continuous improvement of the IMCNHC Plan.

IMCNHC acknowledges that not all of the public who wish to participate will have access to email. For these people, information will be sent by mail.

Social Media

Social media is becoming a key component of communication in modern society. CCA will use various forms of social media to effectively engage IMCNHC stakeholders in the programs and activities of the Corridor and in the implementation of the Plan.

Several current social media tools have been identified below as possible tools to engage more people in stronger ways in the activities of the Canal Alliance.

Social Networking

- Facebook™—Communicates with followers on a daily basis. It allows a wide variety of information to be generated, but can easily be focused on a specific topic by using fan pages, groups, creation of an application, and posting special events. Real time communication can be created through status updates or replies,

posting on walls, creating notes, posting different forms of media, and tagging friends in uploaded media such as videos. It serves as a very easy way to inform, converse, and engage viewers.

- **Twitter™**—Provides an outlet for sharing short messages and is very useful for posting photos, links to websites, and documents. Twitter is great for relationship building through creating quick, witty dialogue with users.
- **LinkedIn™**—Is a site for professionals to network. Creating a group page for Canal Alliance allows members to participate and view discussion boards, promotions, and jobs for the group. Each professional that joins the Canal Alliance group can also have their membership shown on their profile if they so choose.

Social Sharing Sites

- **Flickr™**—Can be used to create a topic related group where people can add photos and video, and there is a discussion board. Anyone can upload photos and/or videos for submission to a group page.
- **YouTube™**—Allows users to upload and share videos. Channels can be created for specific topics of focus and users may subscribe to them. Any YouTube user can view videos and share them via social media, email, or embedding on a website all without even registering.
- **Tripadvisor™**—Travel related sites create a profile with a description, general information, and photos. Travelers can review and rate sites.
- **Blogs**—Offer a unique way to communicate information, generate dialogue, and receive feedback from stakeholders within the IMCNHC. It is also easy to repost from blogs in other social media forms, creating more ways to disseminate information.

Other

- **Niche Social Media Sites**—Help to narrow the target audience by creating content with a specific focus for each type of group.
- **Social Bookmarking Sites**—A way to share favorite websites, articles, and stories. Creating a member profile can potentially direct traffic back to your site.

Podcasts

Podcasts will be written, created, and marketed to increase awareness of the heritage corridor. Some of them may highlight the Corridor's rich and complex stories and its recreational opportunities. Podcasts may also be used to promote sites and enhance interpretation of the themes of the Corridor. Podcasts could be accessible on the IMCNHC website and other websites within the Canal Alliance.

Figure 6.4. Posting information on other Websites

Visitor information will be posted to various sites such as:

- *Enjoy Illinois—Official website of the Illinois Office of Tourism*
- *Visit Northern Illinois*
- *Heritage Corridor Convention and Visitors Bureau*
- *Illinois River Road*
- *Other tourism-related websites*

Program information can be posted to a wide variety of sites such as:

- *The National Trust for Historic Preservation*
- *Public Radio*

IMCNHC Wikipedia® Site

The Canal Alliance will develop a Wikipedia type site, which will allow the collection and dissemination of information about the I&M Canal and the heritage corridor that has been collected and produced over the last 30 years. Individuals and Canal Alliance members will be able to upload information on the canal and a large number of related topics and share our collective knowledge with one another and with the world of Internet users. This will allow for a richer interpretation of the sites in the IMCNHC, enhancing the stories of the people who lived, worked, and visited the IMCNHC.

As the channels for electronic communication will most likely change substantially over the course of this plan, new channels of communication will be adopted as they become available.

Traditional

Annual Reports

CCA staff will develop an annual report for the IMCNHC to illustrate the accomplishments within the heritage corridor. It will be posted on our website and distributed to members of the Canal Alliance and governmental officials. CCA will develop a press release highlighting the accomplishments of the heritage corridor and include information on how to access the annual report.

Books

The steering committee suggested the development of easily accessible printed material on the IMCNHC. They suggested several different types of books be created to better inform the residents, visitors, and children of the unique history of the IMCNHC. Book suggestions include a travel guide, a local history with lots of photos, a definitive history of the IMCNHC, a scrapbook style book or journal, and a children's book about the I&M Canal.

Newspapers

When appropriate, the IMCNHC will issue press releases to notify stakeholders of special events, programs or activities, and updates on the implementation of the management plan.

Radio/Television

When appropriate, the IMCNHC will issue public service announcements (PSA) to television and radio stations throughout the heritage corridor. The IMCNHC will solicit local radio and television network coverage of significant IMCNHC sponsored events. There are several local community television networks within the heritage corridor that could serve as a conduit for information to stakeholders about the events and activities of the IMCNHC.

Face-to-Face Communication

Canal Alliance Conference or Congress

During the public process, many expressed the desire to come together with other stakeholders to share information and foster coordination. In response to this request, the Canal Alliance will host a conference or congress (annually, or as needed) for members of the Canal Alliance to gather for information sharing, training workshops, and discussions of the issues facing the resources and stakeholders of the IMCNHC. Canal Alliance members will be asked to identify key topics for discussion at the Canal Alliance Congress and some Canal Alliance members will be asked to present “best practices” at the congress.

I&M Canal Day

The Canal Alliance will improve awareness of the IMCNHC and its management issues by coordinating an annual Canal Day in Springfield, the Illinois State Capital. Members of the Canal Alliance will discuss the key issues of the Corridor with the various branches, department, and offices of the Illinois state government.

Community Presentations

CCA board, staff, and members of the Corridor Committee or sub-committees will make presentations to local governmental entities within the Corridor communities and state government agencies concerning this plan to:

- Raise awareness
- Impart information
- Answer questions
- Increase participation

Representatives of local, regional, and state government will also receive written materials about the Corridor, including a progress report and information about how they can benefit from involvement in the Canal Alliance.

Canal Alliance members will also be recruited to make presentations to civic and non-profit organizations to raise their awareness of the heritage corridor and benefits from their prospective involvement.

Public Workshops

Public workshops will keep everyone informed on the implementation status, outcomes, impacts, and ideas for new projects to build on current successes.

Tours & Field Trips

Tours and field trips will be provided to the CCA Board, committee members, and the Canal Alliance members concerning the issues and projects being implemented throughout the IMCNHC for those who may not be familiar with sites and projects outside of their individual geographic or interest area. These tours and field trips will be coordinated by CCA, who will ask Canal Alliance members to volunteer to host groups at their site and help raise awareness of their programs, projects, and/or activities.

The tours are currently conceived to be day-long motor coach trips, but may be redesigned as the purpose and itinerary of each trip is defined. Travel time will be used for background presentations. These tours also offer another opportunity to attract the media.

Figure 6.5: Communications Channels Matched to Audiences

	Residents	Children	Alliance	Tourists
Face-to-Face Communication				
Alliance Conference	Secondary		Primary	
Canal Day	Secondary		Primary	
Community Relations Plan	Primary		Secondary	
Public Workshops	Primary		Secondary	
Tours	Primary	Minor	Secondary	Primary
Field Trips	Primary	Primary	Primary	Primary
Electronic				
E-news	Primary	Secondary	Secondary	Secondary
Social Media				
Social Networking Sites	Secondary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
Other	Primary	Primary	Primary	Primary
Podcasts		Secondary		
Videos (YouTube)	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Primary
IMCNHC Website	Primary	Primary	Primary	Primary
Traditional				
Annual Reports	Primary		Secondary	
Books	Secondary	Secondary	Secondary	Secondary
Newspapers	Primary		Secondary	Secondary
Radio/Television	Secondary	Secondary	Secondary	Secondary
	Primary Communication Channel			
	Secondary Communication Channel			
	Minor Communication Channel			

Figure 6.7. Activities Strategy:

The Canal Alliance will organize programs and activities that meet the identified goals.

ACTIVITIES PLAN

Introduction

During the planning process, many potential activities were identified by the public. Other activities discussed below are mandated by the IMCNHC legislation. This section of the plan is organized into activities that were identified by the public and the working committees as being core to the mission of the IMCNHC and potential categories of activities that further the goals identified in the planning process. First described are the core activities, a building block in each goal critical to its accomplishment. Then described and explained are categories of activities for each specific goal.

Core Activities

Core activities are central to the mission of the IMCNHC and are ongoing. Some core activities were identified through public planning workshops and others meet the administrative requirements of federal funding and are necessary to continued local investment. An example of a core activity is the IMCNHC website. During the planning process, the need for a national heritage corridor website was a high priority for stakeholders within the IMCNHC. A website is not a one time activity but a monthly and yearly commitment; successful websites require continual updating and maintenance.

The Core Activities are grouped into two categories:

- Administrative
- Communications & Coordination

Administrative

IMCNHC Administration. The Canal Corridor Association (CCA) staff conducts day-to-day coordination of the Illinois & Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor operations, actions, activities, and business.

Canal Alliance staff compiles and distributes an annual report documenting the Canal Alliance's accomplishments, outcomes, and impacts. The report demonstrates how federal funds were invested and matched, as well as the Canal Alliance's effectiveness at moving toward regional sustainability of that nation's story.

The CCA will complete annual audits, making available all records pertaining to the income and expenses of the Illinois & Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor as per our legislation and commitment to financial transparency.

The CCA will hold quarterly public workshops regarding the implementation of the management plan as per our authorizing legislation. For more information on open meetings, see the Communications Plan.

IMCNHC Infrastructure Maintenance. The CCA will maintain or coordinate maintenance of the Corridor infrastructure, including but not limited to: interpretive and wayfinding signage, highway signage, radio transmitters, and other infrastructure created by IMCNHC funds.

Communications & Coordination. See Communications Plan for details.

Stakeholder Communication & Involvement. Everyone who chooses to participate in the decision making process is welcome to participate. Several options are available, providing opportunities for everyone to bring their strengths to the collective success of the region. For more details, please reference the Communications Plan, and the Decision Making Process later in this section.

Canal Alliance Communication & Coordination. Detailed plans of both communication and coordination with the Canal Alliance are in other sections of this plan. For more details, please reference the Partnership Plan with details of the Canal Alliance, and the Communications Plan.

Figure 6.8. IMCNHC Goals

STORIES Goal: The rich and complex stories of the history and continuing importance of the I&M Canal Corridor will be told through increasingly accurate, compelling, and interesting ways to larger audiences.

SPECIAL PLACES Goal: The Corridor's distinctive sense of place and natural, cultural, and historic resources will be recognized, embraced, and protected.

RECREATION Goal: The recreational amenities of the Corridor will be enhanced and expanded to facilitate their enjoyment by more people.

CONSERVATION Goal: The stewardship of the Corridor's natural resources will be improved. Both the number of stewards and the commitment level and involvement of stewards will be increased.

ECONOMIC IMPACT Goal: The Corridor's economic growth will be built through an increase in heritage tourism and heritage development. Historical and cultural based venues in the Corridor will be enhanced through increased interpretation, use of new technologies, and increases in visitor services and marketing. Entrepreneurial and family-owned businesses will be supported with increased tourism strengthening our historic downtowns.

SUSTAINABILITY Goal: The work of the IMCNHC will be sustained after 2021 by continually engaging more people in increasingly intense roles, continuing to strengthen the collective voice of the region, continuing the coordination and celebration of the work, and securing sustainable funding sources.

Figure 6.9. STORIES Goal: The rich and complex stories of the history and continuing importance of the I&M Canal Corridor will be told through increasingly accurate, compelling, and interesting ways to larger audiences.

Over and over again through the planning process, the public has confirmed the following:

- Most people don't really know the significance of the I&M Canal to Chicago, Illinois, and the nation
- People who have recently learned about the canal can't believe that canal history was not taught when they were in school
- Many local history resources shortchange the impact of the I&M Canal (i.e. that it was only vital until the railroads displaced it)
- Most people are amazed to learn how the canal shaped many aspects of Illinois life today

Telling the stories of the I&M Canal, its history, the people of the region, and its impact makes this "ditch" come alive for many people. The story will be told in the context of the American story through interpretive themes. The individual stories of the people who lived and worked in the corridor will be told to highlight the richness and complexity of the I&M Canal story.

Potential Activities for STORIES Goal

The key to the national heritage corridor is telling the stories of this nationally important place. The IMCNHC stories are currently being told in the landscape as a large outdoor museum with extant canal buildings and structures such as the Canal Commission's Office in Lockport, the Toll House in Ottawa, and the canal itself with its locks, aqueducts, and attractions like the The Volunteer, a replica canal boat at the western terminus of the canal. Currently, interpretive signs and life-size CorTen™ steel silhouettes also help tell the stories in the landscape of the 100-mile region. Several indoor exhibits in a variety of small museums such as the Gaylord Building in Lockport and the Joliet History Museum and in presentations by numerous people assist in telling the stories. There have been several changes to the Corridor in the last five years, and is it a good time to review the interpretation at each site and make recommendations for next steps toward telling more complete and compelling stories.

The above goal will be accomplished by working together on activities which:

- Improve the accuracy of the stories,
- Make the stories more compelling and interesting, and
- Find new audiences for the stories.

Some of the activities that have been identified toward this are outlined below.

Certification & Designation Programs

In order to meet the requests made by stakeholders and to offer our best to visitors, CCA will guide the Canal Alliance through development of a certification program for storytelling, education, visitor readiness, and quality of programming.

As the Storytelling Partners convene, the program will be defined to assist the partners and enhance the visitor experience. In addition, sites will be designated as partner sites to assist the visitor in identifying quality sites to visit, as well as assisting partners in maintaining a quality visitor experience. The initial concept of the sites program is outlined in this section of the plan under the SPECIAL PLACES goal. It will be further developed by the Canal Alliance.

The training, internship, and volunteer programs outlined in this section of the plan will help provide resources to obtain and maintain these certifications and designations.

Outdoor Interpretation and Wayfinding

The current system of interpretation is over 25 years old and is a combination of at least two different systems. Many of the sign panels from both systems have reached the end of their lifecycle and need to be replaced at their current location and within their current sign structure. Each sign needs to be inventoried and recommendations made to its replacement. The current wayfinding system includes approximately 120 driving tour signs and many other directional signs. Currently, 330 plus interpretive signs and 48 life-size Cor-Ten® steel silhouettes also tell the story over the 100-mile region. They all need to be reviewed for accuracy and condition, and recommendations need to be made for any replacements.

In addition, as a new system is developed, new technology may be incorporated, such as 2D barcodes or references to cell phone or podcast options to extend the storytelling.

Illinois & Michigan Canal Books

Currently, the communication of the I&M Canal story is difficult to tell, as there are no real books on the I&M Canal in print and accessible to the public. Several types of books have been suggested in the planning process. The addition of several different books concerning the history of the canal would enhance the accuracy and the amount of the storytelling.

Illinois & Michigan Canal Education Materials

During the almost thirty years of the heritage corridor's existence, a plethora of educational material has been developed about the Illinois & Michigan Canal. As such, the Education & Interpretation Resource Committee will need to review all the existing educational materials available, determine if there are gaps, and develop a list of recommendations for enhancing and expanding the extant I&M Canal educational materials. Existing materials include teacher guides, training courses, and lesson plans from a variety of sources.

Figure 6.10. SPECIAL PLACES Goal:

The Corridor's distinctive sense of place and natural, cultural, and historic resources will be recognized, embraced, and protected.

The I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor is full of historic sites, as well as natural and cultural resources that contribute to the local and regional "sense of place." Almost all of these places have been identified and inventoried since the Corridor was designated in 1984, but most are not protected and have the potential to be negatively impacted by neglect, growth, and development. This plan looks for ways to use the collected information to enhance this distinctive sense of place.

The centerpiece of the IMCNHC is the canal itself. Unfortunately, the condition of the I&M Canal is currently deteriorating. While much has been done to rehabilitate the canal and its related structures since 1984, the last ten years have seen a reversal in the condition of all aspects of the resource, but especially in the tow-path trail along the canal. The majority of the canal is owned and managed by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, whose ability to maintain this historic landmark has been substantially reduced.

Parts of the 61-mile I&M Canal State Trail have been closed recently. Currently, the canal has some significant water and structural issues. Activities to promote well-maintained open trails, assure water levels, and make needed structural repairs need to be explored.

Potential Activities for SPECIAL PLACES Goal***Updated Historic I&M Canal Landmarks Nomination***

The Illinois and Michigan Canal was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1963. The original landmark nomination does not meet today's standards. A revised nomination was written in 1999 by Dr. Michael Conzen; however, the nomination was never accepted by the National Park Service. The Canal Alliance will work with the National Park Service to revise the current draft until it is acceptable to the National Park Service. The proposed boundaries in the new landmark nomination would add many buildings to the landmark nomination. It would be beneficial to those many buildings to be considered landmarks and could assist in the protection of these resources.

Illinois & Michigan Canal

The plan advocates that a working group be formed which will come together to assist the owners of the canal in developing strategies toward its ongoing maintenance and usage. For further information on the working group, see the Partnership Plan.

Historic Preservation Workshops

Eleven canal towns remain from the canal era. All of those towns have special places that help tell the stories of the IMCNHC. To increase the historic preservation capacity in these communities, workshops will be considered to educate the citizens and decision makers in these communities and other communities within the heritage corridor about historic preservation strategies that will assist in retaining the sense of place of these communities.

Designated I&M Canal Passage Sites and Events Program

The Canal Alliance will define a designation program for sites and events that assist with the goals of this plan. The initial concept for the designations is outlined below.

I&M Canal Passage Visitor Centers

Designated as first stops to assist the visitor in planning their I&M Canal visit. Visitor Centers must meet the highest standards for highway access, signage, and visitor services such as parking, restrooms, food, and visitor information.

I&M Canal Passage Anchor Sites

Full service sites that are open to the public more than 1200 scheduled hours per year and actively interpret a least two IMCNHC interpretive themes are eligible.

I&M Canal Passage Affiliate Sites

Sites that are open less frequently and/or have more limited services than Heritage Partner Sites. Affiliate sites must be open more than 600 scheduled hours per year, have on site staff or volunteers, and interpret at least one IMCNHC theme on a regular basis.

I&M Canal Passage Points of Interest

Extant canal sites that do not have staff or services but are safely accessible to the public and relate to one or more IMCNHC interpretive themes are eligible. An interpretive sign or other agreed upon interpretive materials must be available to the public. A single entity may register multiple sites as Points of Interest.

I&M Canal Passage Programs and Events

Organizations or sites that wish to have their events designated an I&M Canal Passage Event must prove that their program or event meets one of the themes of the Corridor and submit an outline of the program for approval by the Education/Interpretation Resource Committee.

Historic Preservation Consultant

Another potential project identified to increase the historic preservation capacity in the Corridor is to hire a “circuit rider” who would service the eleven canal towns, advising those towns on historic preservation and downtown revitalization efforts.

GIS Mapping

Currently, not all of the special places within the IMCNHC are mapped using GIS. Opportunities will be explored utilizing GIS technology to map the special places of the Corridor, including but not limited to designated I&M Canal Passage Sites and wayfinding signage. Once mapped, this tool will be put to use reaching our goals.

Figure 6.11. RECREATION Goal:

The recreational amenities of the Corridor will be enhanced and expanded to facilitate their enjoyment by more people.

A large number of stakeholders involved in the planning process currently use the tow-path trail along the I&M Canal and the largest number of concerns expressed during the planning process were concerning the availability and condition of the existing trails. While the number of trail users is currently unmeasured, it is evident that the trail is used by many people from residents walking or bicycle riding for a short time everyday or several times a week to long-distance runners or bicycle riders coming from greater distances to use the trail at less frequent intervals. As Americans are looking for ways to improve their health and fitness, the trail system within the IMCNHC will become more popular as a convenient and low-cost way for thousands to exercise and improve their health.

While the recreational use of the trails was the most frequent recreational activity mentioned during the planning process, several other recreational opportunities currently exist or have been advocated including: fishing, canoeing, kayaking, hiking in the state parks, biking in the state parks, riding snow-mobiles, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, ice climbing, skydiving, horse back riding, golfing, boating, waterskiing, wakeboarding, tubing, hunting, camping, picnicking, and bird watching.

Potential Activities for RECREATION Goal

Recreation on the original canal towpath trail is a perfect introduction to the stories Illinois & Michigan Passageway for a large audience of people who are interested in walking, bike riding, or running.

Bicycling is the number one activity on the canal towpath, followed by running and walking. The flat, mostly shaded, crushed limestone path is ideal for these activities and Chicagoland provides a large market of recreational enthusiasts. There are several bicycle related projects that have been proposed, including a regional bicycle map, researching good multi-day parking options, and identifying other missing amenities for this market.

Improving Recreational Amenities

Regional Marketing Plan and Map—Develop a marketing plan to promote bicycling through the heritage corridor. In conjunction, develop and make available on-line a downloadable map of the bicycle trails within the IMCNHC.

Signage System—Analyze the existing wayfinding signage system for recreational users and determine how it can be enhanced. See outdoor interpretation and wayfinding.

Improving Canal Trail System—Identify existing trail systems that link to the Illinois & Michigan Canal Trails and analyze the “missing” portions of the Illinois & Michigan Canal Trail from LaSalle-Peru to the Portage Site. Work with the canal owners, recreation partners, and local communities to identify and enhance the existing system of trails to promote the ease of use.

Recreational Amenities—Analyze the level of amenities along the Illinois & Michigan Canal Trails and develop suggestions for enhancing these amenities. In addition, research the need for bicycle rentals and/or other identified services for bicyclists.

Trail Volunteers

The proposed IMCNHC Volunteer Program could also include trail patrols and trail tenders to enhance the visitor experience on the trails. See Canal Alliance Volunteer Program.

Additional Activities

There are many other recreational activities currently in the Corridor. One of the newest is geocaching. The Canal Alliance may wish to promote one or more of the other activities, which cause people to visit the canal or other designated sites within the IMCNHC.

Potential Activities for CONSERVATION Goal

The IMCNHC natural resources attract both residents and visitors, but our objective will be to integrate educational awareness of environmental concerns through recreational exposure in order to develop a vested interest sufficient for volunteers to take stewardship action. The protection of the scenic elements and the biodiversity will help accomplish the preservation and economic development mission of the IMCNHC.

It is our goal to advance the stewardship of our natural heritage for future generations by preserving the plants, animals, and natural communities through management of the lands and waters they need to survive. There are several well-staffed and well-funded potential government partners who are currently good stewards of the natural resources within the IMCNHC. The Canal Alliance will work with these partners to expand the educational opportunities available to our stakeholders.

Volunteer Program

A Corridor-wide volunteer program can include volunteer stewards to take care of the I&M Canal lands and other natural areas and teach the principles of conservation. The Canal Alliance will seek to coordinate volunteer efforts with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and other canal owners.

Kids Programs

Programs designed for children within the IMCNHC may include environmental education and stewardship training. Programs may include camps, school field trips, scouting activities, and other individual and group activities.

Figure 6.12. CONSERVATION Goal:

The stewardship of the Corridor's natural resources will be improved. Both the number of stewards and the commitment level and involvement of stewards will be increased.

Although much of the landscape has been transformed and reshaped by man, both small pockets and large expanses of natural resources remain in the Corridor. Restoration efforts are again transforming landscapes, this time from the ones altered over the last two centuries. Since IMCNHC designation, many acres of open space have come into public or non-profit ownership, but many of these new owners lack funding to restore the open space to its native state or, if restored, to adequately maintain the areas.

These natural resources can neither be maintained nor enhanced, however, without environmental stewardship. The number of stewards needs to be increased and the commitment of existing and future stewards must be enhanced.

Figure 6.13. ECONOMIC IMPACT

Goal: The Corridor's economic growth will be built through an increase in heritage tourism and heritage development. Historical and cultural based venues in the Corridor will be enhanced through increased interpretation, use of new technologies, and increases in visitor services and marketing. Entrepreneurial and family-owned businesses will be supported with increased tourism strengthening our historic downtowns.

The successful sustainability of restored natural, cultural, and historic resources depends on ongoing financial resources. For most sites, this will require at least some annual revenue coming from visitation by tourists. Increased tourism in the IMCNHC will help sustain the resources and support local businesses, jobs and tax revenues. An increase in local tax revenues may, in turn, justify partnerships between these resources and local governments.

The plan encourages a stronger, more unified identity to assist in the marketing of this special place. Tourism needs to continue to be an important segment of the Illinois and IMCNHC economy. The plan explores opportunities to increase heritage tourism in the region by continuing to develop a concentration of high-quality tourism attractions and services and to successfully market the IMCNHC to the lucrative tourism market, especially the heritage tourist, the recreational tourist, and the international tourist.

Increased coordination will improve the efficiency, reach, and effectiveness of existing tourism development and marketing efforts. Efforts need to continue to link IMCNHC sites with other visitor destinations and services.

Potential Activities for ECONOMIC IMPACT Goal***Marketing Plan & Implementation***

Develop and maintain a marketing plan and program for the IMCNHC to increase the public awareness and support of the Corridor and its many resources. A brand will be created for the heritage corridor to increase marketability and recognition of the Corridor. Development of a marketing plan will increase visitation, enhance the visitor experience, and engage visitors in special events throughout the Corridor.

Canal Alliance Training Program

The Canal Alliance will maintain a training/technical assistance program that shares "best practices" and hones skills, knowledge, abilities, and other areas as identified by Canal Alliance members. The program will reach out to the National Park Service and other national and regional organizations to leverage resources. The training seeks to better equip the Canal Alliance members to strengthen and enhance their cultural, historical, natural, recreational, and economic resources by improving the overall sustainability of their sites and organizations.

This, in turn, increases the sustainability of the IMCNHC and offers stronger promotional opportunities to residents, guests, and other visitors. Training topics will be based on the needs expressed by Canal Alliance members. Current requests include: developing interpretive and educational programming, marketing, social media, outcome-based evaluation, capacity building, and new technologies.

IMCNHC Tours

The Illinois & Michigan Canal and the eleven canal communities offer a perfect venue for heritage tourism. To facilitate this, an inventory of tour operators, existing tours, and amenities will be completed. Once an inventory is completed, the Canal Alliance will work with the local tourism organizations, including the Convention & Visitors Bureaus, designated sites, and local communities to develop a heritage tourism program and develop tours along the Illinois & Michigan Canal.

IMCNHC Radio Transmitters

Several radio transmitters were installed by the IMCNHC Federal Commission, most of which have ceased to operate. It is proposed that the current radio transmitters be revived as a marketing tool to broadcast upcoming events to visitors to the heritage corridor.

Passenger Rail

The expansion of Amtrak™ and Metra™ passenger rail schedules within the IMCNHC, especially on the weekends, should be advocated as an enhancement of visitor services.

Potential Activities for SUSTAINABILITY Goal

Canal Alliance Volunteer Program

The Canal Alliance will develop and maintain a diverse Corridor-wide volunteer program to involve as many residents as possible, develop more stakeholders for the future, and assist Canal Alliance members in finding volunteers.

Figure 6.15. Example Volunteer Positions

Interpreters/ Docents	First-person interpreters and guides who tell the stories of the IMCNHC
Youth Coordinators	Volunteers who design and staff youth programs related to any of the goals
Canal Scholars	Speakers bureau
Trail Patrol	Volunteers who regularly walk or bike the trails to provide information and basic services to trail users and report on the condition of the trails
Trail Tender	Volunteers who maintain and enhance the I&M Canal State Trail and other trails throughout the Corridor. They will work with the canal owners toward keeping the trails an open avenue to history, nature, and physical health
Visitor Services	Volunteers who orient visitors to the IMCNHC and provide them with the resources needed to enjoy and enhance their experience in the heritage corridor

Canal Alliance Internship Program

The Canal Alliance will develop and maintain an internship program for college students to complete individual projects throughout the IMCNHC. This internship program is designed to extend a student’s education beyond the classroom, provide opportunities to network with various businesses, museums, and other Corridor service organizations, and to bring young, enthusiastic people into the local preservation, interpretation, and economic development fields.

Figure 6.14. SUSTAINABILITY Goal:

The work of the IMCNHC will be sustained after 2021 by continually engaging more people in increasingly intense roles, continuing to strengthen the collective voice of the region, continuing the coordination and celebration of the work, and securing sustainable funding sources.

The plan will explore how to engage more people in the IMCNHC and how to engage them in more meaningful ways, both in specific projects and in overall Corridor volunteerism. The opportunities in all the goals of the IMCNHC need to be able to attract local people to invest their time and funds. The plan explores ways to build the “people and excitement” investment and to sustain that effort into the future.

Through the establishment and on-going work of the Canal Alliance, a strong, sustaining, and diverse network of partners will be established. Individuals will find opportunities to get involved in coordinated and meaningful ways. Through the organized work of the Canal Alliance and the individual volunteer efforts of citizens, the goals of the IMCNHC will be shared across a larger community of people and will be integrated into more plans and goals of groups of people in all sectors of the IMCNHC communities.

Projects provide valuable experiences for the intern, as well as for the Canal Alliance organization. The internship program will be jointly funded by IMCNHC and local Canal Alliance funds. The interns receive coordinated training and other professionals will critique internship projects to further enhance the intern's and Canal Alliance member's experience and strengthen the final outcomes and impacts for the student, the Canal Alliance member, and the IMCNHC.

Internship opportunities will vary based on need, Canal Alliance members, priorities, and the pool of applicants. Examples of possible internship opportunities are below.

Figure 6.16. Examples of Internships

Technical Support	Works with Canal Alliance member to enhance the website, develop social media outlets, and/or create podcasts
Education and Interpretation	Works with Canal Alliance member to develop education programming, volunteer handbooks, lesson plans, and other forms of programming
Marketing	Assists Canal Alliance members in marketing to enhance site or event visibility throughout the IMCNHC
Conservation	Restores native habitat along the I&M Canal
Recreation	Assists with recreational programs, from walks and runs to youth camps
History/ Research	Works with Canal Alliance members on research and writing projects to improve the accuracy of the existing story telling

Corridor Projects

Over the life of the plan, the Canal Alliance through the resource committees will work to identify and give priority to a list of projects to be considered over the next three-year period as the projects move from good ideas to actionable projects.

Most projects will benefit the Corridor overall or benefit multiple partners and jurisdictions. These projects will generally require matching funds raised by the CCA board, staff, and the Canal Alliance. Canal Alliance projects will receive matching funds from multiple sources. A current example is the interpretive signage project replacing 330 plus extant sign panels throughout the heritage corridor, funded through the Illinois Department of Transportation ITEP grant.

During the planning process, stakeholders identified the need for capital projects within the Illinois & Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor. These capital projects, proposed by both public and private sector, would enhance the natural, cultural, and historical resources of the heritage corridor. The capital projects submitted represent an investment of over \$73 million to the heritage, cultural, and natural infrastructure of the corridor. While neither the Canal Corridor Association nor the Canal Alliance expects to be able to fund capital projects with the money allocated for the IMCNHC, it would be remiss to not identify the need for capital funding in the IMCNHC and include strategies and activities to advocate for these investments within the IMCNHC. Through the Investment Plan, the Canal Alliance will seek to identify other sources of funding which may be used for these worthwhile projects.

Decision Making Process

Everyone who is interested in positive outcomes, improvements to current situations, and making a difference in the Corridor deserves an opportunity to step forward. The following steps are outlined to provide a process everyone can understand and follow with ease.

Because it is impossible to set priorities which will be valid and desirable for the entire life of the plan, a decision making process has been established that will be used to make decisions on an annual basis.

Potential projects will be evaluated through a number of “screens” or filters.

Research Screen—Has the project been researched and is it ready to implement?

Legislative Screen—Does the project fit within the legislative mandate?

Plan Screen—Does the project fit within the vision, mission, guiding principles, and goals of the plan?

Funding Screen—Does the project have a local funding source designated?

Sustainability Screen—Is there a commitment to maintain, keep up, reprint, or evaluate the project so as to continue its life for a reasonable period of time?

Guidelines for Decision Making

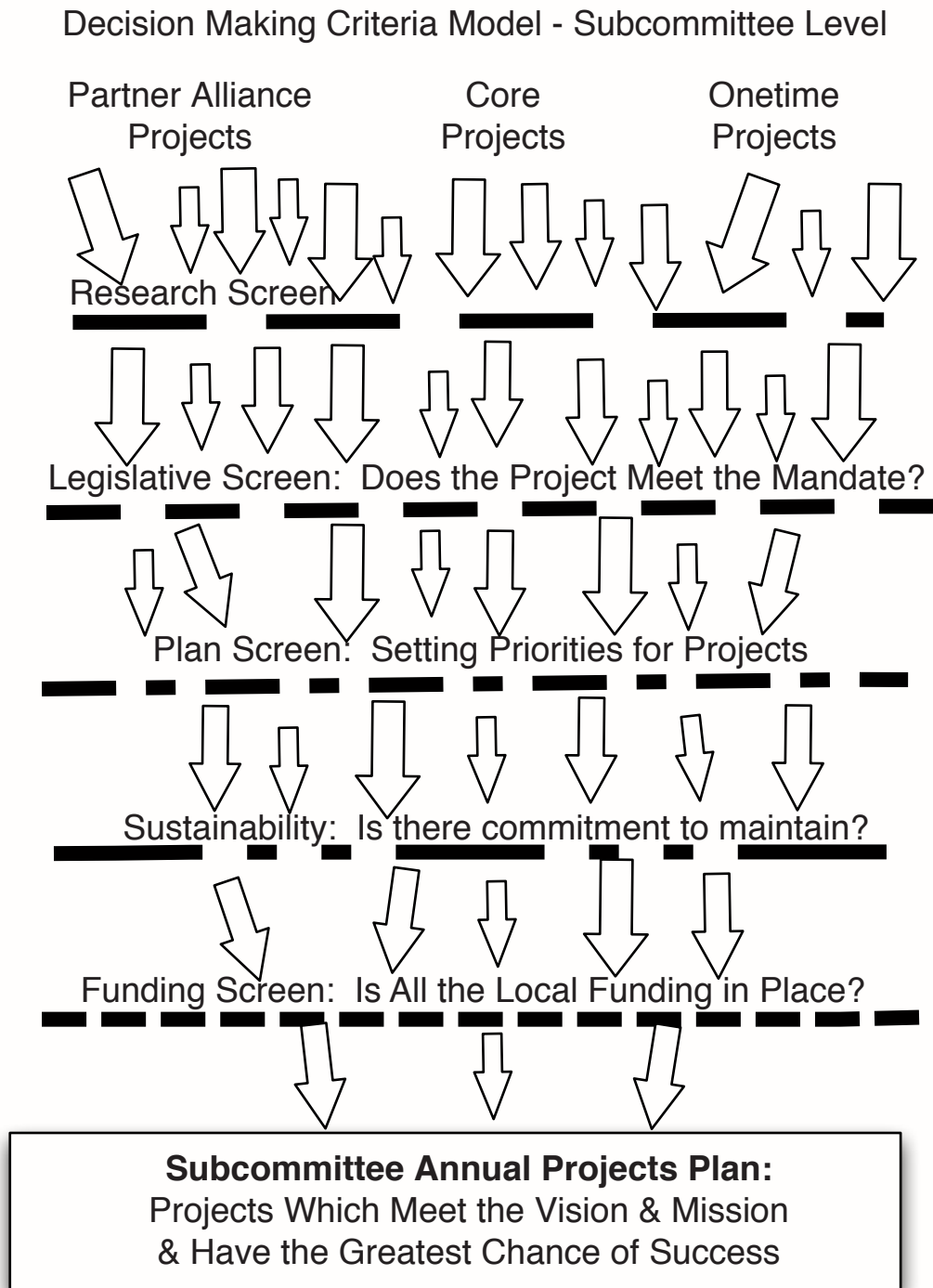
Federal legislation established the IMCNHC and also authorized the Canal Corridor Association to coordinate the heritage area's funds, planning processes, and program implementation. Our federal mandate will be met by working together with the members of the Canal Alliance. To assure that our actions are mission based, on target, and meet the requirements, these guidelines must be followed:

The CCA Board, Canal Alliance Committee, and Subcommittees will set the priority to the projects proposed through the process outlined and make the final determination for IMCNHC funding based on the vision, mission, guiding principles, and goals of the IMCNHC established in this plan. In addition, the following criteria will assist all to understand the process employed to the best decisions can be made.

Appropriateness as a heritage corridor action or activity

- Does the project work toward achieving our legal mandate? Our vision? Our mission?
- Does the project comply with our guiding principles?
- Is the project part of our core activities?
- Does the project help us tell our stories as outlined in our interpretive themes?
- Does the project enhance, further, or augment our current position, situation, or status? Is it outside routine operations or seen as a potential prototype?
- Does the project have a regional rather than a local impact?
- Is this something that the American taxpayer would consider worthy of their participation?

Figure 6.17. Subcommittee Decision Making Model



Feasibility to be accomplished with current resources

- Are there written commitments from partners to make the project a reality?
- Are there technical resources available to assist the project?
- Does the project fit the current budget or can one be finalized through collaboration?
- Does the project have multiple funding sources?
- Does the project have non-NPS funding sources of 60% or more?
- Will a change of elected officials or participating partnerships negatively affect the outcome(s)?
- Are there enough partners at the table to assure it will succeed when the work is done?
- Is there a method to evaluate project outcomes?

Investment Plan

The local “1 to 1” match which is required in the IMCNHC legislation (Section 125) will be met and exceeded in five different ways:

- Raise unrestricted donations from individuals, corporations, foundations, and local and regional governments.
- Secure grants to fund a percentage of Canal Alliance projects.
- Record IMCNHC related projects of partners that are already funded and meet the mission of the legislation and can be counted as local match.
- Solicit Canal Alliance partner projects that meet the mission of the legislation with some existing funding and submit for IMCNHC funds to complete the projects.
- Provide the promise of federal funds as the “seed monies” to assist in getting relevant projects funded with matches.

All investors will be invited to the IMCNHC events and receive information concerning the progress of the IMCNHC through the annual reports, audits, and e-newsletters. All investors will be acknowledged on the website and in the annual reports.

Unrestricted Donations

Since before the establishment of the IMCNHC, individuals, corporations, foundations, and local and regional governments have supported the work of the heritage corridor. Each year, as the work plan is proposed for the upcoming year, Canal Alliance members and others will be solicited to help raise the core funding for the administration of the IMCNHC.

The Canal Corridor Association currently has a database of those who have already invested in the IMCNHC and will grow the database on an annual basis. An annual solicitation will be made in November to individuals, to local and regional governments in January, to foundations according to their schedules, and to corporations according to their schedules. All investors will be invited to gatherings and meetings as appropriate. They will receive an annual report and audit.

Canal Alliance Project Grants

Grant money from foundations, corporations, the state government, and the federal government will be solicited as projects and sources are identified. Also, there is a long history of projects within the IMCNHC being funded from Illinois foundations and corporations. There are a number of Chicago based foundations that will fund projects that will benefit Chicago and Cook County and there

Figure 6.18. Investment Strategy:
The Canal Alliance will raise the local match required by the federal government and strive to leverage additional funds. Sustainability funding options will also be researched and pursued.

are other foundations that will consider projects throughout the IMCNHC.

Potential foundation and corporation funding will be matched with the potential projects as the projects are identified by the Canal Alliance Committee. Also, there are state and federal funds available for specific types of projects through the Illinois Department of Transportation, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the Illinois Office of Tourism, and the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity. A list of potential sources of local matches with the timing of funding opportunities will be identified for each project.

Current Partner Projects

There is a certain amount of work done each year in the IMCNHC that meets the goals of the IMCNHC but is being done independently of the IMCNHC efforts. Identifying this work and recording the money expended will acknowledge the local investment and help establish the ratio of local to federal funds which accurately reflects the local commitment to the Illinois & Michigan Canal.

Partner Projects Seeking IMCNHC Funding

As the annual federal appropriation grows toward the \$1 million annual authorization, partner projects will help raise the local match required through funding partner projects that have already secured some local funds.

Figure 6.19. Three year budget

REVENUE	FFY2012	FFY2013	FFY2014
NPS Heritage Partnership Funds	\$300,000	\$400,000	\$500,000
Unrestricted Donations			
Local government	\$10,000	\$20,000	\$30,000
Organizations	\$10,000	\$15,000	\$20,000
Corporations	\$5,000	\$15,000	\$25,000
Foundations	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
Individuals	\$10,000	\$20,000	\$30,000
Alliance Project Grant Funds			
Foundations	\$25,000	\$100,000	\$125,000
Corporations	\$5,000	\$50,000	\$15,000
Individuals	\$10,000	\$20,000	\$30,000
State of Illinois	\$200,000	\$75,000	\$50,000
Local Governments	\$20,000	\$50,000	\$20,000
Sustainability Funding		\$50,000	\$200,000
TOTAL REVENUE	\$600,000	\$820,000	\$1,050,000
EXPENSES			
Core Activities & Administration			
Staff Salary & Benefits	\$125,000	\$175,000	\$200,000
Office Expenses	\$43,750	\$61,250	\$70,000
Communications Expenses	\$50,000	\$52,500	\$55,125
Alliance Partnership Programs	\$25,000	\$26,250	\$27,563
Infrasructure Maintenance	\$10,000	\$10,500	\$11,025
Marketing Expenses	\$50,000	\$55,000	\$60,500
Alliance Project Expenses	\$290,000	\$300,000	\$300,000
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$593,750	\$680,500	\$724,213
Funds available for other projects	\$0	\$139,500	\$325,788

Figure 6.20. NPS's National Heritage Area Sustainability definition

The National Heritage Area coordinating entity's continuing ability to work collaboratively and reciprocally with federal, state, community and private partners through changing circumstances to meet its mission for resource conservation and stewardship, interpretation, education, recreation and economic development of nationally significant resources.

Critical components of sustainability of a National Heritage Area include but are not limited to:

- Coordinating entity and the National Park Service honoring the legislative mandate of the National Heritage Area
- Coordinating entity's management capacity including governance, adaptive management (such as strategic planning), staffing and operations
- Financial planning and preparedness, including the ongoing ability to leverage resources in support of the local network of partners
- Partnering with diverse community stakeholders including serving as a hub, catalyst and/or coordinating entity for on-going capacity building, communication and collaboration among local entities
- Program and project stewardship where the combined investment results in the improved economic value and ultimately long-term quality of life of that region.
- Outreach and marketing to engage a full and diverse range of audiences.

Sustainability Plan

This plan adopts the National Park Service's working definition of sustainability for national heritage areas. (See the sidebar to the left.) Discussion of these components of sustainability, as were defined by the National Park Service, are woven throughout the plan as well as discussed here. A key to sustainability is to always be attracting more people to the to the IMCNHC and to entice and invite them to contribute their expertise, time, and resources to the effort.

Coordinating entity and the National Park Service honoring the legislative mandate of the National Heritage Area.

The legislative mandate is the backbone of the vision, mission, guiding principles, goals and strategies that were developed through the planning process and are presented in Part 4 of this plan.

Coordinating entity's management capacity including governance, adaptive management (such as strategic planning), staffing and operations.

The sustainability of the local coordinating entity is vital for the sustainability of the activities of the national heritage area. The work of the Canal Corridor Association (CCA) as the local coordinating entity is necessary if the nationally important story is to remain as the main contribution to the region's uniqueness. Individual organizations, community leaders, site managers and landowners who choose to preserve and interpret this national treasure operate independently out of necessity and with limited resources for the broader work. Seamless visitor experiences and a regional perspective of the story necessitate coordination of an entity without the encumbrance of competing interests.

The Canal Corridor Association has a 29-year history in the work of heritage planning and development in the IMCNHC, conceiving, spearheading, and implementing a diverse list of projects from all types of planning to the implementation of projects such as the current Way-finding system to the LaSalle Canal Boat. CCA has served as an advocate, a sponsor, or an implementer for a long list of both short-term and long-term projects. The association has adapted to the opportunities within the IMCNHC, the needs of partners, and the potential of funding throughout its 29 year history.

Financial planning and preparedness, including the ongoing ability to leverage resources in support of the local network of partners.

The key activities of the local coordinating entity of funding coordination, facilitation and regional capacity building need to find stable funding sources. The Investment Plan identifies ways to diversify the funding sources and work towards generating stable funding. Our belief is that while these are challenging economic times there are always opportunities to pursue.

CCA has a history of soliciting funding at the local, state, and federal level and within the private foundation community. CCA's operations and projects have been supported by local individuals, businesses and corporations since 1982.

Partnering with diverse community stakeholders including serving as a hub, catalyst and/or coordinating entity for on-going capacity building, communication and collaboration among local entities.

The key activities of the local coordinating entity of funding coordination, facilitation and regional capacity building need an ever-growing population of involved and committed stakeholders and partners. A large amount of time and energy was devoted towards organizing ways that individuals, organizations, local governments, and state agencies can work together to accomplish the goals of the legislation and this framework. Part 5, the Partnership Plan outlines a starting place and details how the Canal Alliance anticipates organizing the communication and work with all interested stakeholders.

Program and project stewardship where the combined investment results in the improved economic value and ultimately long-term quality of life of that region.

The economic development goal articulated in this plan speaks to developing and supporting heritage development and tourism and supporting entrepreneurial and family-owned businesses to improve the economy, especially of our canal towns and quality of life of the region. Projects will be evaluated for their economic value as a component of prioritization and overall evaluation of their success.

Figure 6.22. Sustainability Strategy: The Canal Alliance will involve as many people as possible through the identified strategies and move them along a continuum of activity and commitment going from minimal interest to involved and enthusiastic.

Outreach and marketing to engage a full and diverse range of audiences.

The key to sustainability was identified as involving more people over time in more committed ways and our sustainability strategy was based on that idea. There have been many advocates for the IMCNHC over the last 30 some years. Many of these early contributors have moved to other areas or have retired and the loss of their time, expertise, and resources is felt. This acknowledgement lead to the sustainability strategy.

Moving individuals along the continuum of involvement is our focus. People who don't know about the IMCNHC will become aware and interested. People who don't visit the historic buildings, cultural sites, trails and natural sites of the IMCNHC, will start to visit them. People who volunteer in the activities that further the mission of the IMCNHC will become more involved becoming advocates and investors. Investors will become recruiters, and so on. A concerted effort will be made over the next year to learn how many people are currently involved and to what degree, and then their movement will be measured along this continuum at key points within the next ten years to measure the success of our strategies.

Figure 6.21. Levels of Stakeholder Involvement in the IMCNHC

Level	Title	Definition
1	Observer	Interested in the I&M Canal and may be aware of the IMCNHC organization - casually visits website, references, articles/resources and may participate in a mailing list or other forms of communication.
2	Visitor	Visits the canal and/or associated sites and enjoys the resources.
3	Canal Alliance Member/Leader	Signs the pledge to contribute to the IMCNHC in one of many ways including volunteering. Someone who leads activities and brings other to the IMCNHC.
4	Investor	Provides financial support for the IMCNHC.
5	Recruiter	Believes in the spirit and mission of the IMCNHC and advocates for others to learn, participate, become involved and invest – a true advocate!

Figure 6.23. Engagement Pyramid

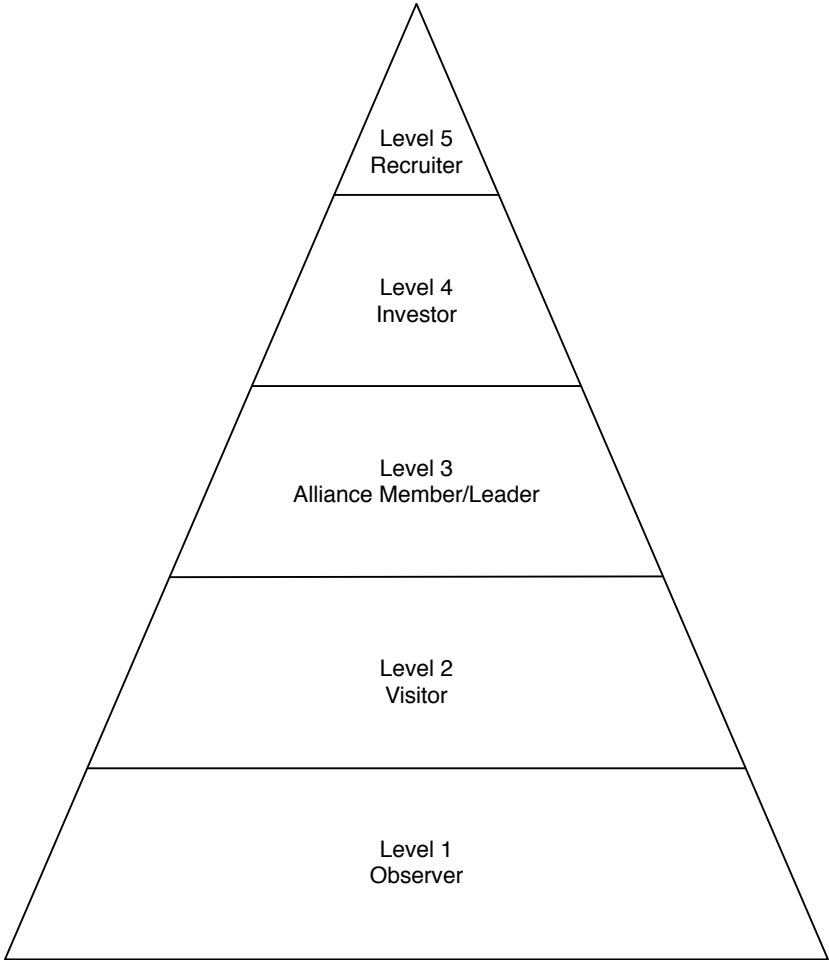
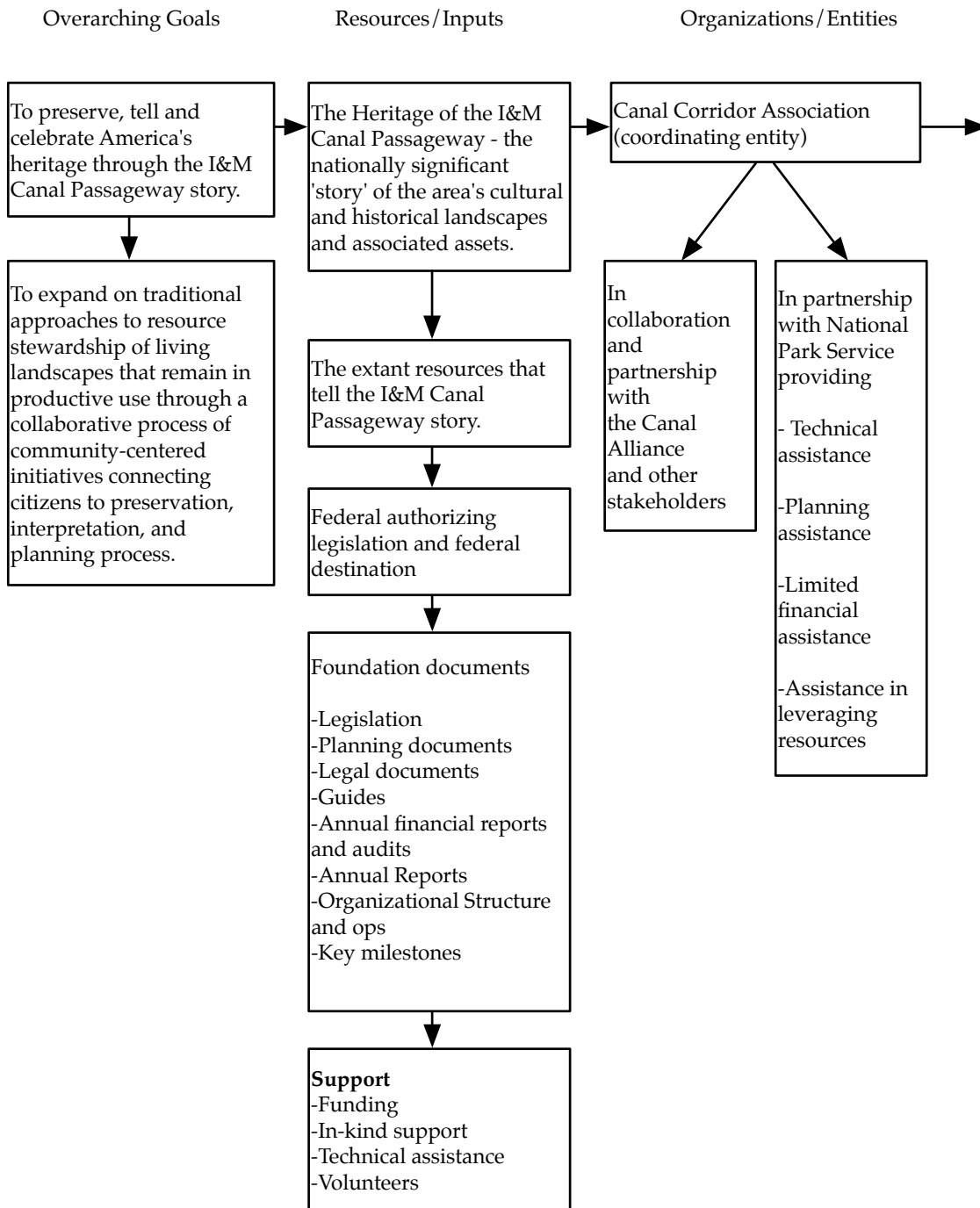
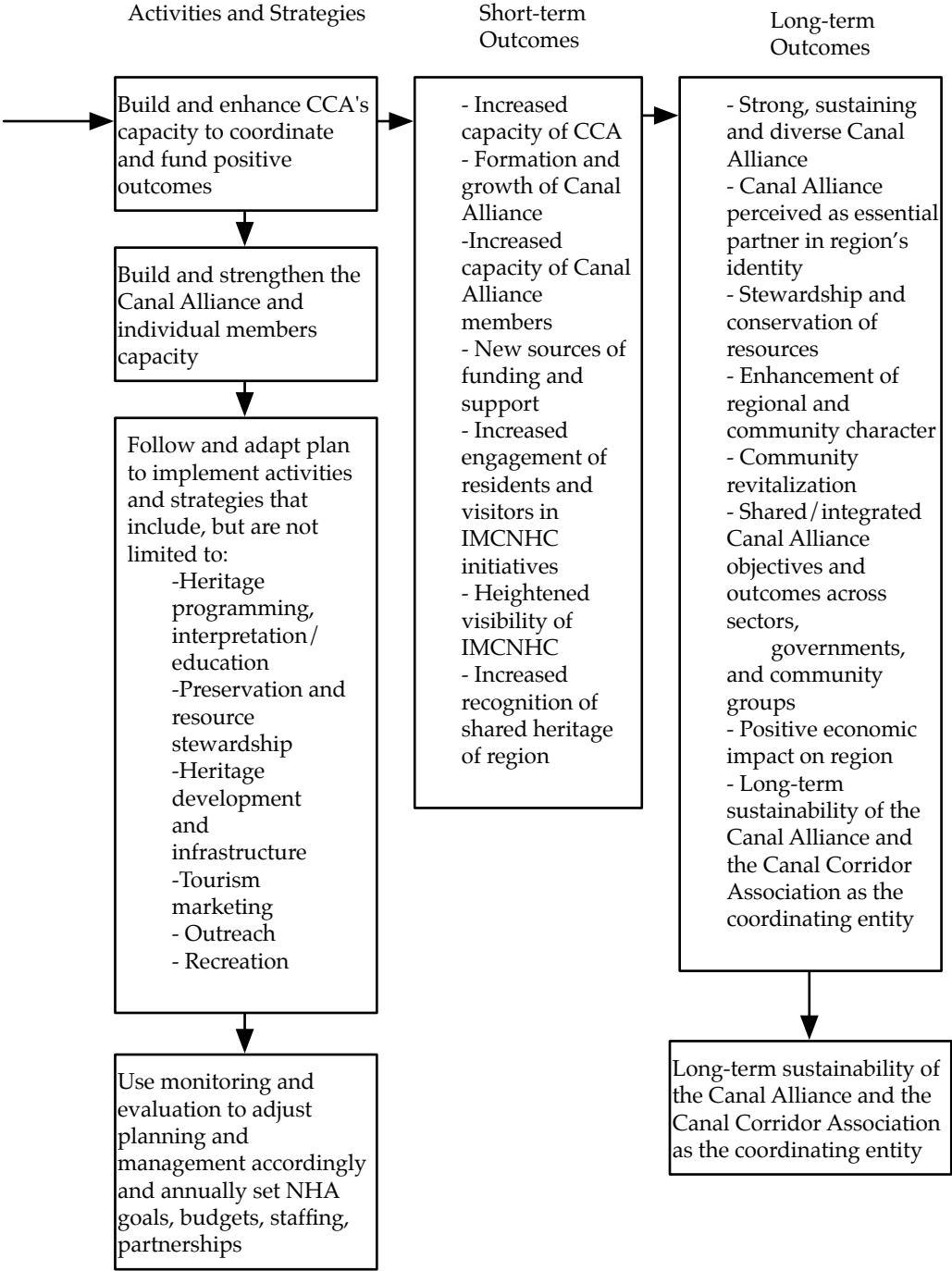


Figure 6.24. IMCNHC Logic Model





Evaluation Plan

Introduction

Everyone who steps forward to preserve and interpret relevant sites of this nationally significant Illinois & Michigan Canal Passageway story is committed to doing good work. Routine evaluation of our individual and collective efforts not only will provide investors with important feedback, but will also document adjustments that improve what we do, how we do it and how we can enhance good work even further.

The purpose of this evaluation plan is two fold:

1. To alter and enhance, on an annual basis the activities and strategies that the Canal Alliance is undertaking to do a better job.
2. To collect the data necessary for a longer-term evaluation of the program by the National Park Service for reporting to the US Congress and other investors. Based on current evaluation standards, in 2018, three years before the end of the current legislation, the National Park Service will begin their evaluation of the success of the IMCNHC.

Evaluation Design

In 2010 as the National Park Service was developing the methodology for the evaluation of the other national heritage areas, a generic NHA Logic Model was constructed. This plan uses that generic logic model to construct a logic model that fits the Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor. The model is presented below.

I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor Logic Model

This logic model is designed to provide a clearer understanding of what to evaluate when evaluating the success of the I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor. The goal of this plan is to collect the data necessary for informative and efficient evaluations in the short and long-term.

Data Collection

The Canal Corridor Association is committed to a meaningful on-going evaluation of our collective efforts, both to provide the basis for improvement and to meet all reporting requirements our investors expect. However, to preserve scarce resources, the people who will carry out this on-going evaluation will not be professional evaluators. Our plan is simple and rooted in obvious logic. CCA will assist Canal Alliance partners, volunteers, and program leaders to assure that data collection and evaluation is a routine part of how we all do business and keep records of the work and data to determine evaluation outcomes. Recordkeeping and evaluation data requirements will be required in every agreement so our promises to our investors are known from the beginning and are as important as all other aspects involved.

To facilitate this data collection and evaluation, the Canal Alliance will collect information quarterly to accommodate three different fiscal years --the National Park Service's (the federal fiscal year), the Canal Corridor Association's fiscal year, and the calendar year.

Data Retention

The data collected and foundation documents created in each fiscal year will be retained for the long-term evaluation process. Documents collected and retained will include, but not be limited to:

- Annual report, annual audit
- Printed copies of program materials
- Printed copies of website and documents outlining the usage
- Printed copies of press releases and press coverage
- Minutes, attendance, and other documents related to all Canal Alliance committee meetings and activities
- Donor, grant, and other financial records
- In-kind and volunteer time records
- Visitation records for key sites
- Canal Alliance membership records

Discussion of Questions

It is anticipated that the evaluations by the National Park Service will be based on the following three questions.

1. Based on the Illinois & Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor authorizing legislation and the "Roadmap for the Future" management plan, has the Canal Alliance achieved the proposed accomplishments?
2. What have been the impacts of the investments made by Federal, State, and local government and private entities?

Figure 6.25. Data Collection

All electronic records will be kept in an electronic form. The CCA will work with the NPS to store the necessary information in the most "green" manner that is acceptable.

3. How does the Canal Alliance structure and the current funding contribute to the sustainability of the Canal Corridor Association (as local coordinating entity), the Canal Alliance, and positive outcomes of the IMCNHC?

Question 1: Based on the Illinois & Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor authorizing legislation and the “Roadmap for the Future” management plan, has the Canal Alliance achieved the proposed accomplishments?

One of the five strategies identified in the plan - Strategy 2: The Canal Alliance will organize programs and activities, pertains to this question.

Figure 6.26. Evaluation Strategies

The five strategies identified in this plan will assist in answering these three questions.

Question 1 is best answered through the review of the success of **Strategy 2**

Question 2 is best answered through the review of the success of **Strategies 2 and 3**

Question 3 is best answered through the review of the success of **Strategies 1, 4 and 5**

Data Collection for Question 1

We will systematize data collection and evaluation at the program level by putting it into the necessary program planning. Leaders of short-term programs will document what the status was before they started (2nd graders lack of knowledge of the Canal’s history or the lack of tourist materials telling the stories of the I&M Canal), what they did (taught the IMCNHC-developed curriculum to 24 students or developed brochures, podcasts, and videos), and what it was like when they were done (sheets collected with two facts that kids said they learned or number of tourist brochures distributed, podcasts and videos downloaded).

We will encourage photographs before, during, and after programs and activities. We will use whatever technology is appropriate for the activities and participants and what the program leaders are comfortable with for our records.

Open-ended and more abstract activities will have a similar planning process; we will build in descriptions that are appropriate for the activity. Communication efforts will include quantifying efforts and outcomes, such as blogged items, number of replies, and the results. For workshops, we will quantify how they were promoted, how well attended they were, their content, and the progress made in advancing the content.

All records will be organized and retained for possible long-term evaluation.

Strategy 2: The Canal Alliance will organize programs and activities.

Our questions to answer:

- What is the baseline?
 - What activities and programs exist in the Corridor?
 - What stories are being told?
 - Which stories identified in the plan aren't being told?
 - What are unmet needs?
 - Who is offering programs and activities?
 - How can partners help?
- Are there opportunities to improve/expand existing programs or help create new ones?
- Is there duplication of programs? Are there programs that are not worth continuing?
- How can the Canal Alliance increase programs and activities?
- Should the Canal Alliance offer programs or collaborate with others?
- What are the priorities?
- What differences are our actions making? More programs, more participation, more results, and so on.

What can we count? What information can we collect?

- Count the number of visitors at partner sites.
- Count the number of partner sites open to the public.
- Count the number of Canal Alliance programs and activities conducted.
- Count the numbers of people who attend those programs and activities.
- Count the number of partner programs and activities conducted.
- Count the number of people who attend those partner programs and activities.
- Survey a sample of the attendees at the programs, activities, meetings, conferences, public workshops, tours, field trips to evaluate effectiveness of event.
- Record what stories are being told.
- Record how the stories are being told.
- Record how many people are participating in the story telling.
- Count the volunteers and volunteer hours.
- Survey annually the volunteers to understand the quality of their experience.
- Count the interns and the internship hours.
- Count the number of Canal Alliance members who participate in training.

How can the experience be evaluated?

The Canal Alliance will review the above data to evaluate if we are organizing programs and activities that tell the stories of the IMCNHC as identified in one or more of the themes: annually assess what programs and activities are offered by the Canal Alliance; what programs/activities should be added or eliminated based on the effectiveness of the programs/activities and ability to meet the needs of the stakeholders. The Canal Alliance will evaluate the change in programs from previous years.

Question 2: What have been the impacts of the investments made by Federal, State, and local government and private entities?

Impacts are measured by the amount of the investment and what outcomes were delivered. Two of the strategies identified in this plan will help answer this question. Strategy 2, which was developed under Question 1 and Strategy 3 below.

Strategy 3: The Canal Alliance will raise the local match required by the federal government.

Our questions to answer:

- What is the history/baseline?
- Who has supported the CCA and the IMCNHC in the past?
- What messages will make people willing to support the IMCNHC?
- How long will we need to cultivate prospects—will the payoff be soon enough?
- What are our priorities?
- Whom should we solicit?
- Will corporations offer support? Foundations? Individuals?
- Who should make the ask? How many people are making the ask? How much should we ask for?
- Money is easily counted. What other measures of success are there?
- Are the sources sustainable? Will they recur?

What can we count?

- Count the money raised
- Count the number of sources of the money
- Count the number of reoccurring sources of money
- Count the number of people making the ask for money
- Count the money from individuals
- Count the money from corporations
- Count the money from foundations
- Count the money from non-federal governments

- Count the money from non-NPS federal government sources
- Count in-kind donations
- Count volunteer time

How can the results be evaluated?

The Canal Alliance will evaluate their success annually in raising the local match required by the federal government: quarterly tally the monies, in-kind donations, and volunteer time (allocating it toward the local match). The CCA Board, Corridor Committee, subcommittee members, and Canal Alliance members will record their time and mileage towards meeting the local match. The amount of local match will be evaluated against previous years and trends will be evaluated.

Impact Evaluation

Return on investment or the impact of the investment can be evaluated by looking at what has been accomplished under question 1 and what was invested (counted here) for that accomplishment.

Question 3: How does the Canal Alliance structure and the current funding contribute to the sustainability of the Canal Corridor Association (as local coordinating entity), the Canal Alliance, and the work of the IMCNHC?

The IMCNHC plan is based on civic engagement. Essentially, the sustainability of the activities of the Canal Alliance will be evaluated, by evaluating the number of people involved in the IMCNHC work and the quality of their engagement. Our long-term evaluation objective is to get an accounting of the people involved and a measure of the depth of their connection and then over time to see how many more people get involved and if their involvement gets deeper. We believe that two key measurements to assure our sustainability are vitality and a variety of funding sources.

Vitality is based on a mix of more activities/programs, more partners, and more investors, and of bigger programs, more committed partners, and a larger local investment. Our collective goal is that the pyramid of involvement grows wider and taller. Due to the limits of the Canal Alliance, one measure of vitality is to spin off successful programs/activities/events/ destinations. As they become established and successful, they can take care of themselves and the Canal Alliance can nurture other fledgling efforts.

Another measure of sustainability is to have many revenue sources as well as the flexibility to pursue one or two sources that may become easier to obtain without distorting the mission of the Canal Alliance.

For example, the sources may include program fees, government contracts, foundation grants, sponsorships, royalties, special events, and philanthropic support—as the Canal Alliance works to obtain all of these all the time, it needs to be able to double one source (or increase it tenfold) without becoming over-reliant on one source and without upsetting the balance of funding resources in the Canal Alliance.

Establishing a Baseline 2011-2012

While we work on establishing this long- term evaluation, we will evaluate our progress with communication and activity goals as short-term results. For example, we know we need to use current technology to make it easy for people to be engaged in our activities—using web sites, Twitter™, YouTube™, blogs, Facebook™, and so on—and we will evaluate those efforts, including the number of people involved and, as much as possible, their degree of involvement. We will evaluate our success with public meetings, face-to-face communication, and on tours, as well.

As committee chairs gather information about unmet needs, we will collect their findings to form a baseline. Eventually we can use the baseline to measure progress in civic engagement. We will take a year to establish the baseline, and in some cases many years will be needed to see impact. To provide meaningful evaluation during the ten years, we will follow the progress of the strategies; if it seems that the group leading a strategy is not moving along a path that will reach its goals, the strategies may need to be changed.

Three strategies identified in the plan address question 3.

- Strategy 1: The Canal Alliance will communicate with as many stakeholders as possible through a variety of ways.
- Strategy 4: The Canal Alliance activities will engage as many Canal Alliance members as possible.
- Strategy 5: The sustainability of the Canal Alliance relies on involving more people in the Canal Alliance and engaging them more deeply in the IMCNHC.

Strategy 1: The Canal Alliance will communicate with as many stakeholders as possible through a variety of ways.

Our questions to answer:

- What is the baseline?
- Who are the stakeholders?
- How many are in each group?
- How many are being communicated with now?
- What methods are we using to reach them?

- How can the Canal Alliance improve existing communication?
- What do we need to reach more people/carry more messages?
- What are our priorities?
- What differences are our actions making?

What can we count?

- Count number of people attending the Canal Alliance Conference
- Count number of people attending Canal Day
- Count number of people who hear our presentations
- Count number of people attending public workshops
- Survey all of the above groups to evaluate the experience and whether they are more or less likely to get further involved

How can the experience be evaluated?

We will evaluate which communication methods are working and measure the change from year to year. With limited resources increased awareness and changes in attitude won't be measured. Rather we will use programs and activities as a surrogate with more programs creating more results in meaningful/successful communication. Program/activity evaluation will be an efficient and effective evaluation for the IMCNHC.

Strategy 4: The Canal Alliance activities will engage as many Canal Alliance members as possible.

Our questions to answer:

- What is the universe of prospects?
- How many might come to us, or do we figure we will need to go to them?
- What are our priorities?
- What activities are we using to engage prospects?
- How many activities are in each main goal?
- Failure may be more common than success; how/what can we learn from being turned down? Can we build on it?
- How many partners do we have? What differences are they making?
- Based on our learning, what is the next step? For example, do we build deeper connections with current partners or continue to try to acquire new ones?

What can we count?

- Count the number of Canal Alliance members
- Count the number of members of each group in the Canal Alliance

- Count the number of volunteer hours given by those members
- Survey the Canal Alliance members to see if their attitudes and behaviors have changed concerning the IMCNHC and the Canal Alliance
- Count the number of activities started and completed

How can the results be evaluated?

The evaluation will be based on how activities are engaging the Canal Alliance members in the Canal Alliance. The Canal Alliance will evaluate their success annually in engaging as many Canal Alliance members as possible in as many activities as possible. To this end, the Canal Alliance will report quarterly on the number of the Canal Alliance members engaged per activity as e-news, social media, tours & field trips, the Canal Alliance Conference, Canal Day, etc. In addition, the Canal Alliance will utilize data received from partner training workshop evaluations and an annual evaluation survey of Canal Alliance members on how to more effectively engage them in the IMCNHC activities.

Strategy 5: The sustainability of the Canal Alliance relies on involving more people in the Canal Alliance and engaging them more deeply in the IMCNHC.

Our questions to answer:

- Are the programs growing? Is the audience growing?
- Are the Canal Alliance members more committed?
- Are the funding sources more diverse?
- Are the funding sources stable?
- Is the funding base secure?
- What programs are being spun off?

What to count?

- Count the people who are visiting partner sites
- Count website hits. Record the length of time spent on the site.
- Count blog hits and comments
- Count interactions on social media
- Count number of photos and videos posted to Flickr™ and YouTube™
- Count number of people on our e-news list
- Evaluate the quality of the electronic responses
- Count the number and size of newspaper articles covering issues and events

- Survey all stakeholders and Canal Alliance members and ask them to rank their involvement on the pyramid. Compare with baseline and previous years
- Evaluate the current and projected funding
- Evaluate all of the counting and data collecting from above to evaluate, project, and guide the sustainability

How to evaluate?

The evaluation will be based on how engaged the Canal Alliance members are in the Canal Alliance. The Canal Alliance will evaluate their success annually in engaging as many Canal Alliance members as possible. To this end, the Canal Alliance will report quarterly on the number of the Canal Alliance members engaged via e-news, social media, tours & field trips, the Canal Alliance conference, Canal Day, etc. In addition, the Canal Alliance will utilize data received from partner training workshop evaluations and an annual evaluation survey of Canal Alliance members on how to more effectively engage them in the IMCNHC.