



GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF COMMUNITY SERVICE

General Overview

In 1993, the Montana Community Service Act (MCA 90-14-103 to 109) established the Office of Community Service and tasked the office with renewing the ethic of service, engaging all citizens in service to the state, calling upon young people to serve, building the service of young and old into existing frameworks, and establishing programs that benefit the state and its people.

The Governor's Office of Community Service is currently supported with \$174,910 in State General Funds. The office leverages General Funds with federal funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). This funding supports the administration of AmeriCorps State programs in Montana, emergency preparedness outreach, statewide training and technical assistance, and volunteer recognition events. The Governor's Office of Community Service also builds the capacity for citizens to engage in service by brokering opportunities and resources, and helping develop new partnerships.

Currently, the Governor's Office of Community Service is led by a Governor-appointed Executive Director and supported by the 15-member Governor-appointed Montana Commission on Community Service. Base staff includes executive director, finance manager, grants manager, and communications coordinator. Additional staff supported by grants includes grant coordinators. The Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) has provided the office's fiscal and central support services since 1997.

To keep up-to-date on all Governor's Office of Community Service activities by visiting serve.mt.gov and follow on twitter [@ServeMontana](https://twitter.com/ServeMontana).

AmeriCorps Program

AmeriCorps is a federal National Service program created to give individuals the opportunity to address critical community needs through service. The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), a federal agency, funds National Service programs, including AmeriCorps, as well as AmeriCorps VISTA and Senior Cops.

CNCS requires that a state-specific Commission and office administer AmeriCorps State programs. Since 1994, the Governor's Office of Community Service has administered

funding to over 30 AmeriCorps State programs in Montana with approval from the Montana Commission on Community Service.

AmeriCorps State programs apply for one of two funding streams. Competitive applicants compete nationally for funding with final funding decisions made by CNCS. Formula funds are allocated directly to the state and distributed through a RFP process wherein applicants compete within Montana. Formula funding decisions are made by the Montana Commission on Community Service and are approved by CNCS.

The first two AmeriCorps programs in the state were launched in 1994: Montana Conservation Corps (MCC) and Volunteer Montana. While the Volunteer Montana program ended a seven-year run in 2000, the Montana Conservation Corps has grown to be one of the premier AmeriCorps programs in the nation. AmeriCorps programs in Montana respond to the ever-changing needs of the state. Programs like Tech Corps, which focused on technology education, have given way to programs like FoodCorps, connecting Montana students to healthy, local food.

AmeriCorps has a dual purpose: to engage youth in service and improve Montana communities. Since 2006, AmeriCorps members serving through Governor's Office of Community Service sponsored programs have recruited more than 40,000 volunteers to assist with community-based projects. Members have developed community action groups for developing recycling plans to organizing Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites where low to moderate income Montanans can receive free tax preparation from IRS certified volunteers.

Each year, AmeriCorps programs provide opportunities for hundreds of young adults to engage in service in Montana communities while earning an education award. In Montana, more than 7,200 AmeriCorps members have served, qualifying for more than \$15 million in Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards, of which \$10.5 million have been paid to Montana Universities, Colleges, and lenders.

Montana Conservation Corps

Montana Conservation Corps is a nonprofit organization that empowers youth and young adults through hands-on conservation service and education. Each season MCC enrolls over 200 young adults from across the country, age 18 and up, in the AmeriCorps program, and more than 100 local teens, ages 15 to 17, in the Youth Service Expedition program. MCC members live, learn and serve together, in crews of six to eight members, in some of the state's wildest places. They complete conservation projects in local communities, national forests, state and national parks, wildlife refuges and federally designated wilderness areas. Their mission is to inspire young people through hands-on conservation service to be leaders, stewards of the land, and engaged citizens who improve their communities.

Visit mtcorps.org for more information

Big Sky Watershed Corps

Big Sky Watershed Corps is an AmeriCorps program that assists Montana's watershed communities to make a measurable difference in local conservation efforts while strengthening the experience of young professionals. Participants focus on watershed research, planning and project implementation, watershed education and outreach, and community engagement. Big Sky Watershed Corps is offered through a partnership of Montana Association of Conservation Districts, Montana Conservation Corps, and the Montana Watershed Coordination Council.

Visit mtcorps.org/join-watershed for more information

FoodCorps Montana

In the summer of 2006, Grow Montana partnered with Montana Campus Compact to launch Montana's FoodCorps, the nation's first statewide team of VISTA volunteers trained to create and grow farm to cafeteria programs. Based, in part, on this successful model, in 2011, national FoodCorps launched with 50 members in 10 states. In August 2012, the Montana FoodCorps and national FoodCorps programs merged, with the FoodCorps Montana team now working in ten communities state-wide to help schools serve local, healthy foods; build and tend school gardens; and educate kids about how and why to eat food grown closer to home.

Visit montanafoodcorps.org for more information

Montana State Parks AmeriCorps

Montana State Parks AmeriCorps promotes healthy, active, and environmentally aware communities by enhancing park land, enriching educational opportunities, increasing volunteerism, and improving community outreach in state parks. Members serve at state parks and regional offices across the state of Montana. Members help strengthen the Montana State Parks as an outdoor classroom for children, develop trail guides, and organizer volunteer events and promote volunteer opportunities to instill a sense of stewardship.

Visit stateparks.mt.gov/americorps for more information

Justice for Montanans Project

Justice for Montanans members help empower low to moderate income Montanans to advocate for their legal rights, and increase access to justice. Established by the Montana Legal Services Association, in partnership with the Self-Help Program of the Montana Supreme Court Office of the Court Administrator and the Montana Office of Consumer Protection & Victim Services, the project places 13 members throughout Montana to help provide and expand intake, legal information and referral services for Montana's low-income residents seeking legal assistance.

Visit justiceformontanans.org for more information

ReadyMontana

Since 2006, the Governor's Office of Community Service has received grant funding from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security through a sub-grant award from the State of Montana Disaster and Emergency Services. These funds support all-hazard disaster and emergency preparedness efforts under the ReadyMontana initiative. ReadyMontana calls-to-service encourage Montanans to take actions to prepare personally for disasters and emergencies and help their neighbors before and after disasters. ReadyMontana is designed to engage the whole community and reach all Montanans, especially those who are not typically involved in disaster and emergency preparedness and response by providing resources for individual, family, and community preparedness.

FireReady Montana

The FireReady Montana call-to-service encourages Montanans to prepare, mitigate, and prevent wildfires. The office works with FireSafe Montana, Keep Montana Green, Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, federal land management agencies, and other organizations to host Wildfire Awareness Week every June. Home and property owners are the target population for this call-to-service.

Rocky Mountain ShakeOut

The Rocky Mountain ShakeOut is a basic earthquake awareness campaign. The ShakeOut message is simple: when the ground begins to shake: **drop, cover, and hold on**. The ShakeOut is part of a larger initiative sponsored by the Earthquake Country Alliance, whose members include the Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Geological Survey, and Red Cross. In 2013, over 24 million people around the globe participate in ShakeOut drills. Montanans participate in this activity annually in October. Current partners include: American Red Cross of Montana, Montana Bureau of Geology and Mines, State of Montana Disaster and Emergency Services, and local partners across the state. The primary target audience for this call-to-action is youth.

WinterReady Montana

WinterReady Montana efforts educate Montanans on how to be prepared for hazardous winter weather and encourage Montanans to help their neighbors stay safe and warm during the winter months. Existing partners include Senior Corps programs and the Montana Food Bank Network. The primary target audience for this call-to-action is seniors and low-income individuals.

Neighborhood Preparedness Parties

In September 2011, the Governor's Office of Community Service introduced Neighborhood Preparedness Parties, a community-based approach to disaster and emergency preparedness. The office provides resources, including Map Your Neighborhood program materials, starter emergency supply kits, and preparedness checklists, for Montanans interested in hosting preparedness event in their neighborhood or community. The Governor's Office of Community Service also provides funding to the American Red Cross of Montana to engage their extensive network of volunteers to conduct structured, formal preparedness training for schools, senior centers, neighborhood associations, businesses, and more across the state.

To keep up-to-date on ReadyMontana activities, visit ready.mt.gov and follow on twitter @ReadyMontana.

Partnerships and Signature Projects

To promote and expand service and volunteering in Montana, the Governor's Office of Community Service has developed long-term, sustainable partnerships and initiatives. In addition, the Office has implemented special Governor's initiatives. For example, the office facilitated the partnership between Montana Conservation Corps (MCC), an AmeriCorps State Program and former Governor Brian Schweitzer's Warm Hearts Warm Homes Initiative. For eight years, AmeriCorps members worked with local Human Resource Development Councils (HRDC) to provide home weatherization services for low-income Montanans in all 56 counties and on all seven reservations.

Youth Serve Montana Scholarships

Since 2006, with support from the Student Assistance Foundation (SAF) and the Montana Campus Compact, the Governor's Office of Community Service has awarded nearly \$500,000 to Montana students attending in-state, public colleges. These \$1,000 scholarships are awarded to high school seniors who have volunteered more than 100 hours during their senior years.

ServeMontana Symposium

Since 2010, the Governor's Office of Community Service has brought together streams of service for training, networking, and presentations at the annual ServeMontana Symposium. Hosting a multiple-day conference, the Office engages the service community in applicable and hands-on sessions and speakers, and highlights the impact of service in local communities.

Global Youth Service Day

The Governor's Office of Community Service has served as a Global Youth Service Day Lead Agency since 2011. Acting as Youth Serve America's "boots on the ground" for the Global Youth Service Day each spring, the Office provides mini-grants to local clubs, youth groups, and schools to engage youth in meaningful service on GYSD.

ServeMontana Awards

The Governor's Office of Community Service recognizes outstanding individuals and organizations across Montana at an annual awards ceremony in Helena. Awards recognize volunteers of all ages and backgrounds who demonstrate a strong commitment to their community and greatly enhance civic life in Montana.

Volunteer of the Game

The Governor's Office of Community Service recognizes community volunteers at home games throughout the Grizzly and Bobcat football season. Volunteers are recognized on the Grizzly and Bobcat football fields during the game and receive a certificate of thanks for their commitment to service.