

# State Service Plan

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**servedmontana**



*Photo: ServeMontana Award Recipients with Governor Gianforte and Executive Director Sarah Sadowski, June 2021 Photo Credit: Alyssa Mathieu*

The Montana Governor's Office of Community Service State Service Plan is a three-year framework for National Service and community volunteerism in Montana. The State Service Plan is based on State Statute and is a requirement of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) dba AmeriCorps. Effective January 1, 2022 - December 31, 2024, this plan outlines the objectives, goals, and initiatives of the Montana Commission on Community Service.

### ***The Governor's Office of Community Service***

- *Encourages citizens of all ages and backgrounds to engage in National Service and community volunteerism*
- *Encourages organizations to involve youths in the life and work of communities*
- *Works to promote and expand volunteer opportunities for all Montanans*



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*To request the State Service Plan in an alternate format, request more information, share ideas, and ask questions, please call 406.444.9077 or email [served@mt.gov](mailto:served@mt.gov)*



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## History of National Service and the Montana Commission

National Service is the result of over 150 years of citizen engagement and philosophy rooted in the notion that service and devotion are key ingredients to democracy and achieving greater good. From William James's essay, the Moral Equivalent of War in 1910, to President Franklin D. Roosevelt's creation of the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930's, National Service has progressed and remained a legacy priority



of the majority of America's 20th Century presidents. In the 1960's President John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps, in 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson worked with Congress to pass the Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) Act. SeniorCorps was originally mandated under the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973.

In 1990, President George H. W. Bush signed the National and Community Service Act into law, establishing a Commission on National and

Community Service. In 1993, President Bill Clinton amended President George H.W. Bush's legislation to create the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and ultimately expanded National Service. National Senior Service Corps, comprised of Foster Grandparent, Senior Companion, and Retired and Senior Volunteer Programs, was created under the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973. National Senior Service Corps was reformed into Senior Corps under CNCS. The updated National and Community Service Act required each state to create a service commission to receive and administer federal funds for National Service programs. In 1994, the first cohort of AmeriCorps members began serving in Montana and across the country, and service continues today. On April 21, 2009, President Barack Obama signed the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act to reauthorize and further expand National Service programs. In 2018, CNCS implemented the Transformation and Sustainability Plan. The multifaceted Plan created the Office of Regional Operations, consolidated Senior Corps into AmeriCorps Seniors, initiated rebranding, and more, <https://americorps.gov/sites/default/files/documents/20180606CNCSTransformationandSustainabilityFinal.pdf>

Created in 1993 as a result of the [National and Community Service Trust Act](#) and the Montana Community Service Act, the Governor-appointed Montana Commission on Community Service and the Governor's Office of Community Service promote and expand National Service and volunteer opportunities in Montana. Under Montana Code Annotated 90-14-104, the Commission on Community Service is staffed by the Governor's Office of Community Service (OCS). While OCS is one of the offices within the Office of the Governor, OCS is administratively attached to the Montana Department of Labor and Industry. The Office is significantly funded by grants from AmeriCorps.

*To view Montana's state service profile, visit [americorps.gov/national-service-report/mt](https://americorps.gov/national-service-report/mt)*

*Photo: Montana State Parks AmeriCorps members getting ready to knock out some noxious weeds. Photo Credit: Alyssa Mathieu*





## Commissioners

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*Photo: Members of the Commission on Community Service, along with OCS staff and Lieutenant Governor Juras, October 2021 Photo Credit: Alyssa Mathieu*

The Montana Commission on Community Service was created by the 1993 Legislature at the Request of the Governor, MCA 90-14-101ff. The Commission is a fifteen-member, governor-appointed, diverse, non-partisan body representing a broad cross-section of service interests and statewide leadership in Montana. The Commission's vision for Montana is healthy, vibrant communities where individuals are empowered to meet needs while learning and growing through National Service and community volunteerism.

For a current list of Commissioners visit [serve.mt.gov/Commission/commissioners](https://serve.mt.gov/Commission/commissioners)

## Governor's Office of Community Service Staff

The Governor's Office of Community Service (OCS) is staffed by nonpartisan public servants committed to national service and community volunteerism. Prior to Sarah R. Sadowski's appointment by Governor Gianforte in Feb 2021 to serve as Director, Sarah served as OCS's Grants Manager for six years. A two term AmeriCorps VISTA alumna, she served one year in Fairbanks, AK and another in Helena as an AmeriCorps Leader with Montana Legal Services Association. Sarah is a University of Montana graduate and a Leadership Montana Alumna.



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*For a complete list of current staff, please visit [serve.mt.gov](https://serve.mt.gov)*



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## State Service Plan Overview

Montana's State Service Plan is made real by the Commission on Community Service, the Governor's Office of Community Service staff, the National Service network, and ultimately all people. The Plan is approved by the Governor in support of all streams of AmeriCorps service in our great state. The State Service Plan is intended to guide all streams of National Service and community volunteerism as an inclusive strategy to meet diverse needs facing our state, and how National Service can be strengthened through training and partnerships. This Montana State Service Plan covers a three-year period and is intended to be adaptable. The State Service Plan serves as a funding prioritization tool and fulfills requirements set forth by 45CFR2550.80 and [AmeriCorps](#).

To identify Montana's greatest needs, develop goals and objectives, and strategize how the goals and objectives can be achieved, statewide public input was gathered from 1,387 respondents for the Community Needs Assessment section. Additional national and state-based research was conducted, and input was gathered from Commission members and those they represent, through State Service Plan Workgroup meetings. Guidance for the State Service Plan was derived from special initiatives and focus areas of AmeriCorps, Governor Gianforte Initiatives, and statewide public input.

AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps Seniors across Montana strive to meet community needs that fall within the scope of National Service. Combined, thousands of participants provide service, capacity building, and other activities allowed by AmeriCorps.



**AmeriCorps**  
Montana

*See side bar for outline of focus areas and special initiatives, contact us to share ideas and opportunities!*

### AmeriCorps Focus Areas and Special Initiatives

*Adopted by Montana*

- Economic Opportunity
- Education
- Environmental Stewardship
- Healthy Futures
- Veterans and Military Families
- Capacity Building
- Employers of National Service
- National Days of Service
- National Service Recognition Day
- Eli Segal Education Award match

### Governor Priorities

*Adopted by OCS*

Several priorities outlined in Governor Gianforte's Montana Comeback Plan align with AmeriCorps. Gubernatorial priorities OCS aims to address through service are:

- Partner with Tribal Nations
- Improve Education and Empower Montana's Workforce
- Reduce Barriers to Employment
- Increase Opportunities for Veterans
- Increase Access to Mental Health Care
- Combat the Drug Epidemic
- Promote Stewardship of Montana's Public Lands





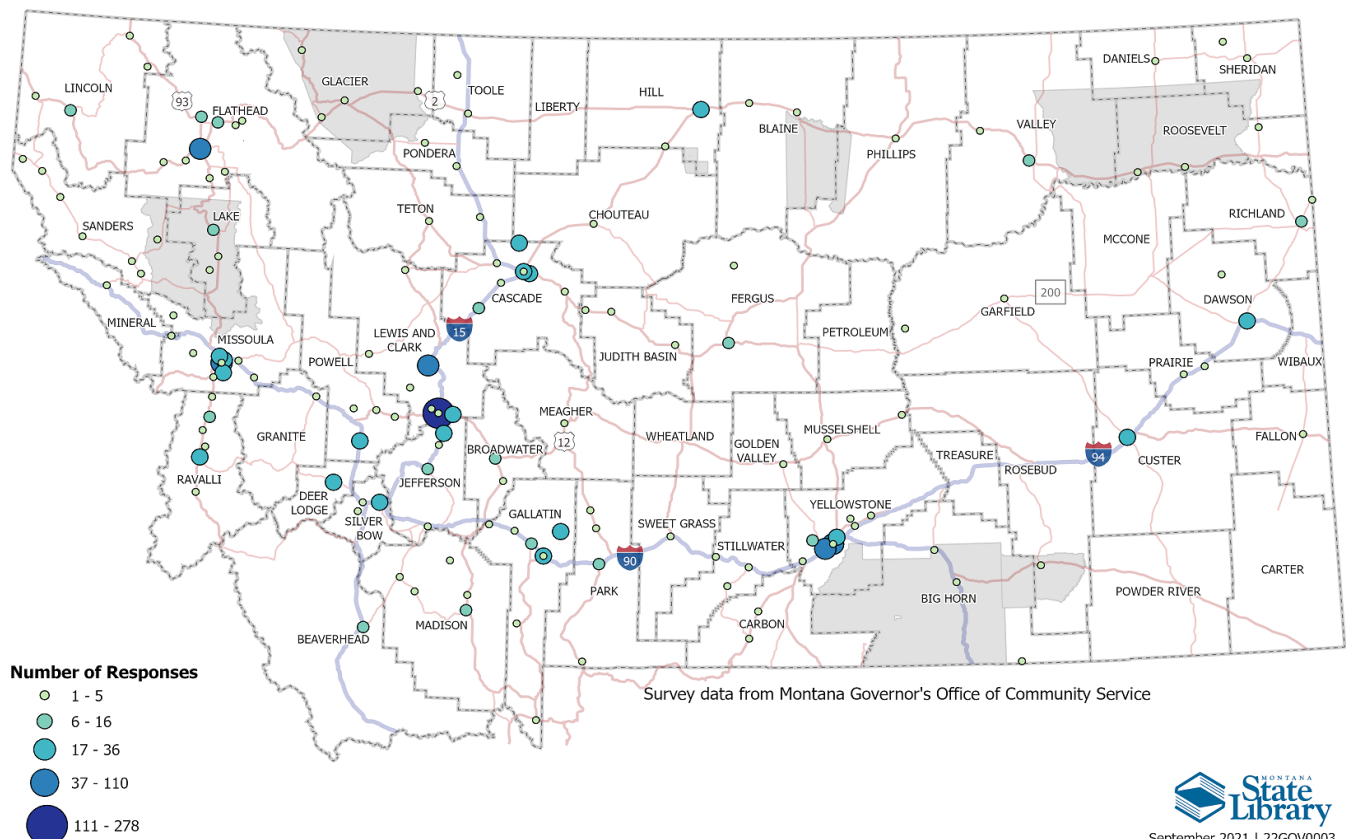
# Community Needs Assessment

From June to September 2021, **1,387** Montanans responded to the OCS Community Needs Assessment over double the response from the 2018 Community Needs Assessment! The Assessment is designed with intention to capture what Montanans believe to be the greatest needs facing communities across the AmeriCorps Focus Areas.

Over half of the respondents chose to submit optional demographic information. Over **96** percent of respondents identify as white, **4.8** percent identify as Native American, and **3.6** percent identify as Hispanic or Latino. Nearly **73** percent of respondents were between the ages of 25-54, while just under **27** percent of respondents were 55 or older. Over **66** percent of respondents indicate they are currently experiencing or in the past have experienced mental health issues, with **54** percent indicating they are experiencing, or have experienced homelessness.

*The map below represents where individuals responded from across the Montana:*

## Community Needs Assessment Respondents



MONTANA  
State  
Library  
September 2021 | 22GOV0003

*With the ultimate goal to align National Service resources to meet the identified needs and develop contributors, results from the Community Needs Assessment guide the Office of Community Service in outreach, program development, technical assistance, and more.*



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## Assessment Overview

The following are the **most pressing needs in each Focus Area** as identified by respondents to the Community Needs Assessment.



### Economic Opportunity

Lifting up individuals, families, and communities to meet their full potential

- 75.5 percent of respondents agree [safe, fair, and affordable housing](#) is the most important community need in this Focus Area
- 47 percent of respondents indicated access to [affordable healthcare \(including prescription coverage\)](#) is a major issue facing communities in Montana
- 24 percent of respondents indicated [homelessness intervention](#) as a priority

### American Indian Affairs

Partnering with Tribal Nations

- 56.5 percent of respondents agree [missing and murdered indigenous people](#) is the most important community need in this Focus Area
- 31.5 percent of respondents report [substance use prevention and treatment](#) is a need in this area
- 25.8 percent of respondents agree [cultural preservation](#) is an important need, with a further 13 and 8.6 percent ranking traditional lands preservation and traditional language preservation, respectively, as important community needs
- [Safe, fair, and affordable housing, routine mental and emotional health services,](#) and [suicide prevention](#) are also concerns in this Focus Area

### Education

Pre-K, K-12, trade school, vocational education, college, and adult education

- 42 percent of respondents chose [vocational training, apprenticeships, and trade schools](#) as the most important community need in this Focus Area
- Over 31 percent of respondents believe [after school programs](#) and [early childhood education](#) are priorities
- [Reducing student loan debt](#) is a concern of over 37 percent of respondents; nearly 30 percent of respondents think [financial literacy](#) is key for Montana's learners



## Healthy Futures

### Positive health outcomes for all generations

- **37.5** percent of respondents agree [affordable health care \(including prescription coverage\)](#) is the most important need in this Focus Area, with over **21** percent noting [access to primary and preventive health services \(such as rural health clinics\)](#) is a challenge in their community
- **35** percent of respondents ranked [routine mental and emotional health services](#) as the second most important need; **21** percent of respondents agreed [suicide prevention](#) is a priority
- Over **25** percent of respondents ranked [substance abuse prevention and treatment](#) as one of the most important issues facing Montana

## Veterans & Military Families

### Serving those who serve us

- Mental and emotional health is a priority in this Focus Area. **47** percent of respondents selected [PTSD treatment and support](#) and nearly **44** percent chose [routine mental and emotional health services](#), making them the top two pressing needs in this Focus Area. Related to these needs are [suicide prevention](#) and [substance use prevention and treatment](#), chosen by **30.5** percent and **20.5** percent of respondents, respectively
- Nearly **40** percent of respondents agree [safe, fair, and affordable housing](#) is a critical issue for Montana's veterans and military families

## Environmental Stewardship

### Protecting and utilizing our greatest resource

- **53** percent of respondents chose [wildfire prevention](#) as the most important community need in this Focus Area. Over **21** percent selected [natural disaster preparedness & response](#)
- Over **36** percent of respondents agree [drought resiliency](#) is another pressing need. [Water conservation/efficiency](#) was chosen by over **20** percent of respondents, and **19** percent of respondents are concerned with [water quality](#)
- **29** percent of respondents agree [public lands maintenance](#) is critical to Montana's communities

## Montanans Age 55+

### Serving legacy Montanans

- [Affordable health care \(long term care, prescriptions, in-home care, and insurance\)](#), ranked highest, with nearly **48** percent of respondents agreeing it is most critical need of Montanans 55+
- Over **44** percent of respondents chose [safe, fair, and affordable housing](#) as a pressing need in this Focus Area
- [Staying in community/aging in place](#) was another prominent need, chosen by nearly **34** percent of respondents. This need is thematically related to [living independently](#) and [isolation](#), which were each chosen by over **20** percent of respondents

*Pg. 6 Photo: Montana Campus Compact AmeriCorps Leaders celebrate their close of service with AmeriCorps Program Manager Dannette Fadness and Program Specialist Eli Bowe. Photo Credit: Alyssa Mathieu, August 2021.*



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# Strategic Objectives

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## Objective 1

Lead a community of National Service leaders who are recognized as successful at delivering AmeriCorps as an impactful strategy to meet community needs and develop contributors.

### Goals

### Strategies

1

**Expand and Support National Service in Montana with excellence, accountability and public trust**

1.1

Conduct statewide outreach to engage eligible organizations in areas of identified need to cultivate impactful service activities for Montanans of all ages, from service learning in schools and communities to engaging AmeriCorps, VISTA, NCCC, AmeriCorps Seniors, and Alums.

1.2

Develop and implement responsive recruitment strategies to increase accessibility of AmeriCorps resources for organizations, and for individuals seeking to serve.

1.3

Provide professional development and cross-stream training for AmeriCorps staff, members, and partners as appropriate. Includes regular calls and in person trainings, ServeMontana Symposium, participating in member swearing-in ceremonies and close of service events.

2

**Partner with Tribal Government, organizations, and people to create more and better opportunities**

2.1

Increase cultural understanding of tribes across all levels of Montana's national service network by training Commissioners, OCS staff, AmeriCorps staff, and AmeriCorps members. Trainings include Governor's Office of Indian Affairs Tribal Relations Training, Essential Understandings of Indians, and others as available.

2.2

Engage with Tribal Nations and state agencies to increase opportunities for AmeriCorps to be a strategy to achieve goals in tribal communities, and to increase opportunities for tribal members to serve successfully.

2.3

Provide tribal keynote and tribally led breakout sessions at the ServeMontana Symposium, and in program specific trainings.



# 3

## Encourage and Promote Civic Engagement in Montana AmeriCorps, and all Montanans

### 3.1

Train OCS staff and AmeriCorps staff to lead civic reflection with groups of AmeriCorps members and leaders. Year One expects 3 civic reflections per full service term.

### 3.2

Assess resources and determine how civic education can be an integral component of AmeriCorps service in Montana; include Constitutional elements to civic reflection as part of AmeriCorps service and National Days of Service.

### 3.3

Develop civic ethic in national service members. Provide end of service training to discuss skills learned in service that apply to civic Life After Service, and encourage lifelong civic engagement.

### 3.4

Increase opportunities for AmeriCorps member and community volunteer engagement for MLK Jr Day, a National Day of Service. Oversee and promote MLK Jr Day across Montana.

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**"Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?' "**

**- Martin Luther King Jr.**



*Photo: AmeriCorps VISTA members pose on the Capitol steps, August 2021. Photo Credit: Alyssa Mathieu*



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## Objective 2

Curate a dynamic, engaged group of individuals representing a broad cross section of service interests and statewide leadership in Montana to be the **Montana Commission on Community Service**.

### Goals

### Strategies

1

**Emphasize experiences and increase competency of Commissioners**

1.1

Provide Commissioner Orientations, grounded in purpose and processes of the Montana Commission on Community Service, including quarterly meetings, Robert's Rules of Order, annual conferences, and more as requested.

1.2

Implement a high quality Commissioner position description to include engagement expectations.

2

**Engage Commissioners in OCS and national service activities**

2.1

Conduct assessment of Commissioner experience, competency, skills, inclination and availability to engage in OCS events and national service program activities.

2.2

Develop and implement a Commissioner Engagement Plan, including tracking system, and process for Commissioners to share experiences and provide feedback on the engagement.

2.3

Commissioners participate in Office workgroups as well as national service, community volunteerism activities, and public events.



***“Act as if what you do makes a difference.***

***It does.”***

***- William James***

*Photo: Justice for Montanans members celebrate their close of service, July 2021. Photo Credit: Alyssa Mathieu*







*Photo: Montana Conservation Corps Youth Crew members show Lt. Governor Juras their service on a new trail at Spring Meadow Lake State Park.  
Photo Credit: Alyssa Mathieu*

***“Growth is what happens outside your comfort zone.”***  
***- Lt. Governor Juras***

### 3

**Expand Commissioner engagement in public outreach and educating public officials**

#### 3.1

Generate opportunities for Commissioners to represent OCS at community events, with tools provided by OCS as appropriate.

#### 3.2

Engage Congressional Delegation, state legislators, and other elected officials in learning about Montana programs and service opportunities, and on matters impacting national policy.

### 4

**Increase sustainability of national service and community volunteerism**

#### 4.1

Diversify financial support of AmeriCorps in Montana. Garner support from corporations, businesses, and non-profits to expand financial capacity.

#### 4.2

Engage philanthropic partners, current and new, to expand and promote initiatives of OCS and national service programs in Montana.

#### 4.3

Provide volunteer management training for all AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps Seniors by partnering, supporting costs of attendance, and where logical, sponsoring the training.



*Photo: Montana Public Health Corps members tour the Fairview Bridge following orientation. Photo Credit: Stephanie Reynolds, Montana Public Health Corps Director*



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## Objective 3

**ServeMontana** encourages, promotes, and recognizes community volunteers of all ages and backgrounds who make lasting impacts.

### Goals

### Strategies

#### 1

**Develop and strengthen relationships with community partners who engage volunteers in meaningful ways**

##### 1.1

Recognize at least five community volunteers and two organization's contributions to Montana's urban, rural, and tribal communities, through an annual open nomination process and the ServeMontana Awards public ceremony with the Governor, Commissioners, and OCS staff.

##### 1.2

Highlight community volunteers by using traditional and social media to share impacts and stories of community volunteerism to the public.

##### 1.3

Collaborate with partners and all national service to share, highlight, and amplify stories of impactful volunteer service.

#### 2

**Encourage and recognize youth and emerging adult volunteerism**

##### 2.1

Recognize and promote volunteer service by young adults and encourage them to enter postsecondary education institutions in Montana by offering Youth ServeMontana Scholarships in partnership with Reach Higher Montana and Montana Campus Compact.

##### 2.2

Recognize and promote volunteer service by Montana college students with Student Volunteer Award, in partnership with Montana Campus Compact.

##### 2.3

Promote the efforts of AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps Seniors, and VISTA programs that provide opportunities for youth to serve.



*Photo: MCC Youth Crew Leader describes her ambition for service.  
Photo Credit: Alyssa Mathieu*

3

Encourage Montanans to be organ donors

3.1

April is Donate Life Month across the United States. The annual Governor's Gift of Life ceremony, in partnership with LifeCenter Northwest, honors Montana donors for their selflessness in giving the ultimate gift.

3.2

Promote Donate Life campaign statewide through the Trees of Life, brochures, and web-based materials to inform Montanans of the benefits and encourage them to become registered organ, eye, and tissue donors.

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*“A symbol of hope for those who are waiting.”*



Photo: The Gift of Life Tree, by Montana artist Jim Dolan, is proudly displayed in the Capitol every April in honor of Donate Life month  
Photo Credit: Alyssa Mathieu



Want to become a registered organ donor? Visit our website:

[serve.mt.gov/commission/organ-eye-tissue-donations](https://serve.mt.gov/commission/organ-eye-tissue-donations)



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## Objective 4

Optimize **Office of Community Service** infrastructure to support and sustain high performance with a culture of positive customer service, attitude of excellence, and accountability.

### Goals

### Strategies

#### 1

**Fortify Commission and Office of Community Service internal operations and infrastructure**

##### 1.1

Develop written internal Commission Office policies and procedures for AmeriCorps grant management to document and streamline processes.

##### 1.2

Develop written internal Commission Office policies, procedures, manual for *financial management* to document and streamline processes.

##### 1.3

Develop continuity and succession plans for staff member functions, including the Director.

#### 2

**Increase OCS strategic development, operations, and effectiveness**

##### 2.1

Provide information, training, and technical assistance to organizations that result in quality resources for National Service program and member development.

##### 2.2

Assist with meeting planning and program training needs by providing, coordinating, and linking to resources.

##### 2.3

Ensure statewide AmeriCorps programs meet program compliance, partnership, and impact objectives through risk-based compliance and ongoing monitoring and data collection.



Photo: A Big Sky Watershed Corps member discusses wildfire reduction with Lt. Governor Juras  
Photo Credit: Alyssa Mathieu

## Objective 5

Supplemental State Plan for Montanans Age 55+.

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### Goals

### Strategies

1

**Assess areas of compatibility and engage with AmeriCorps Seniors in Montana**

1.1

Identify practical geographic and program areas to partner, such as the AmeriCorps Seniors Association, National Days of Service, and training events.

1.2

Increase knowledge of intergenerational service to maximize the exchange of knowledge among older Montanans and younger AmeriCorps members.

1.3

Recognize national service and community volunteerism by Montanans age 55+, including Governor recognitions, ServeMontana Awards, Senior Corps Week, Older Americans Month in May, and National Volunteer Week.

2

**Increase opportunities for organizations that serve legacy Montanans, and elders**

2.1

Conduct outreach to agencies that provide services to Montanans age 55+ in the areas of identified need to assess how national service can increase their capacity to serve older Montanans. Agencies include but are not limited to the Governor's Council on Aging, Area Agencies on Aging, state and local organizations, nonprofits, and faith-based organizations.

2.2

Explore how AmeriCorps programs can increase capacity of services to seniors through their activities and best policy practices to support Montanans age 55+.

3

**Increase opportunities for legacy Montanans, and elders to serve in AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps Seniors**

3.1

Raise awareness of National Service opportunities for Montanans age 55+, including veterans, Tribal members and underrepresented groups. AmeriCorps Seniors is Foster Grandparent Programs, Senior Companion Programs, and Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), through outreach and marketing, and social media campaigns.

3.2

Increase awareness of the social, economic, and health benefits of National Service and community volunteerism, such as the transferability of the Education Award.



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*Photo: AmeriCorps State Program Directors and Office of Community Service staff gather after convening, August 2021*

*Photo Credit: Alyssa Mathieu*

## External Factors

The Montana Commission on Community Service and Governor's Office of Community Service recognize many factors may change over the three-year period of this State Service Plan. Factors beyond control include funding, the economy, citizen demographics, peer influences, natural disasters, leadership, competition for volunteer time and attention, social media, and priorities identified by the Governor and/or the Montana Legislature. Other factors that impacted this plan are COVID-19 and its wide reaching impacts on people, AmeriCorps Transformation and Sustainability Plan, and changes in national leadership. It is recognized and commonly understood that as the 4th largest state in the U.S. and being highly rural, Montana is philanthropically underserved.

## Conclusion

This State Service Plan guides the mission delivery of the Montana Commission on Community Service, and is the framework for a vibrant ethic of national service and community volunteerism throughout Montana, across all streams of AmeriCorps. The State Service Plan will be updated annually by the Commission to evaluate progress and work toward achieving goals. Public comments on the 2022-2024 State Service Plan may be submitted anytime in the three-year period to [serve@mt.gov](mailto:serve@mt.gov).

From Montana's largest cities and towns to the vast tribal, frontier, and rural communities, National Service and volunteerism are proven strategies to meet critical needs and develop citizens. Service can truly serve as a strategy in addressing our most significant community needs outlined throughout the State Service Plan. The Montana Commission on Community Service, Governor's Office of Community Service, AmeriCorps Office of Regional Operations, National Service programs, nonprofit and government organizations, businesses and corporations, educational institutions, and other stakeholders must continue to work together to make meaningful differences in lives and landscapes across our great state. Together we will advance and recognize National Service and community volunteerism to make Montana safer, smarter, and healthier for generations to come.



## ***National Service Endorsement***

The Commission maintains a seat for the AmeriCorps Office Of Regional Operations Staff to serve as a non-voting, ex-officio member to facilitate well-rounded discussion and collaboration. The Montana Commission on Community Service and the AmeriCorps Office Of Regional Operations worked closely to develop this State Service Plan and plan to continue to grow a strong working relationship in all streams of National Service and community volunteerism in Montana.

## ***Governor Approval***

This 2022-2024 Montana State Service Plan was approved by Governor Greg Gianforte on Tuesday, November 16th, 2021 pursuant to the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act (Public Law 111-13).



Greg Gianforte  
Governor of Montana

## ***Acknowledgements***

OCS acknowledges our partners and appreciates the diverse support leading to ensuring service positively impacts Montana's people and places, including those who serve. Our partnerships are vital to the success of service efforts aimed at benefiting all Montanans. As we implement this State Service Plan, we recognize that it takes the collective efforts of each of us to make our communities healthy and prosperous. We thank the individuals, organizations, and philanthropic partners who engage with us in service. If you or your organization wants to learn more about engage with the mission of OCS or support our AmeriCorps family, or if you just want to share ideas and learn more about what we do, contact us! Thank you so much.

*This material is based upon the work supported by AmeriCorps under Grant No. 19CAHMT001. Opinions or points of view expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of, or a position endorsed by, AmeriCorps. 250 copies of the public document were published at an estimated cost of \$3.085 per copy, for a total cost of \$771.39, which includes \$771.39 for printing and \$0.00 for distribution.*