

serve montana

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF COMMUNITY SERVICE

STATE SERVICE PLAN

2023 Update!

2022– 2024

State Service Plan

CONTENTS

History of National Service & the
Montana State Commission.....2

Commissioners & Office of
Community Service Staff.....3

State Service Plan Overview..... 4

Community Needs Assessment.....5

Strategic Objectives.....8

External Factors & Conclusion.....16



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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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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 citizens engaged in service is the key ingredient 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. Senior Corps 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 closed State Offices and 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). OCS is one of the offices within the Office of the Governor, and is administratively attached to the Montana Department of Labor and Industry. The Office is primarily funded by grants from AmeriCorps.

To view Montana's state service profile, visit 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

3



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/who-we-are/Commission

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. The director is the only Governor-appointed staff member.

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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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 pressing needs, develop goals and objectives, and mobilize service as a strategy, statewide public input was gathered from 1,387 respondents for the Community Needs Assessment section. 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, while learning and growing.

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

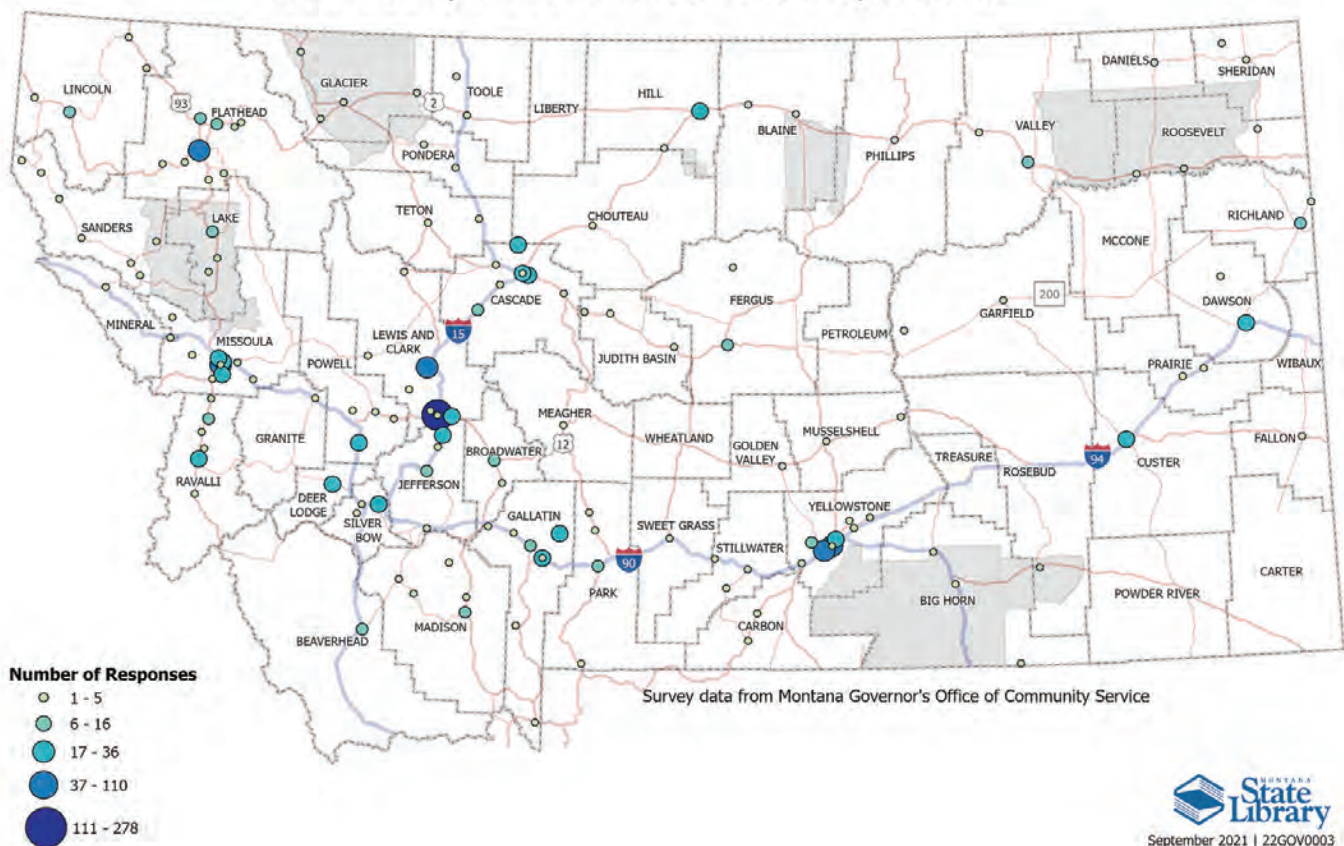
5

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



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.



Photo: Montana State Parks AmeriCorps member, Melanie Hertgen, at her service site Missouri Headwaters State Park. Photo Credit: Alyssa Mathieu

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 preventative 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





Strategic Objectives

8

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

Developed and implemented responsive recruitment strategies to increase accessibility of AmeriCorps resources for organizations and for individuals seeking to serve; including a recruitment guide and marketing tools.

1.3

Provide professional development and support 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

Provided tribal keynote and tribally led breakout sessions at each of the annual ServeMontana Symposiums and in program specific trainings.



3

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



Trained OCS staff and AmeriCorps staff to lead civic reflection with groups of AmeriCorps members and leaders. Each AmeriCorps program is expected to lead 3 civic reflections per full service term.



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.



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.



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

“Life's most persistent and urgent question is, what are you doing for others?”

- Martin Luther King Jr.



Photo: AmeriCorps members pose for a group photo during the ServeMontana Symposium, March 2023. Photo Credit: Allie Shepler



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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

Implemented a high quality Commissioner position description to include engagement expectations. It is currently available on our website for review and use.

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 actively engage 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 celebrate their close of service, July 2021. Photo Credit: Alyssa Mathieu





“Growth is what happens outside your comfort zone.”

- Lt. Governor Juras

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

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, recognizing AmeriCorps Week, 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 nonprofits 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 Campus Compact members read to students for MLK Day of Service
Photo Credit: Montana Campus Compact AmeriCorps*



SERVEMONTANA



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



Recognized 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.



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



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

2

Encourage and recognize youth and emerging adult volunteerism



Recognize and promote volunteerism 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.



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



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.

13

3.2

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

New!

3.3

Develop a sustainable method of recognition to honor Montana's organ donors.



***"A symbol of hope
for those who are waiting."***



Photo: The Gift of Life Trees, sculpted by Montana artist Jim Dolan, are displayed on the first floor of the Capitol and in the Scott Hart building. Photo Credit: Alyssa Mathieu



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

serve.mt.gov/commission-initiatives/Organ-Eye-and-Tissue-Donations



SERVEMONTANA



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 delivery and member development.

2.2

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

2.3

Deliver responsible and accountable grant oversight through risk-based compliance monitoring.



Photo: Montana State Parks AmeriCorps member, Kelly Minear gives educational presentation on ducks at Lone Pine State Park.
Photo Credit: Montana State Parks AmeriCorps



Objective 5

Supplemental State Plan for Montanans Age 55+.

15

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 programming 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, as well as 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 so agencies are aware of 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 to serve 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 includes 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.



SERVEMONTANA



Photo Credit: Alyssa Mathieu

"I am lucky to serve with many talented specialists related to noxious weeds, rangeland management, GIS, and even archaeology. There are a multitude of opportunities to serve directly with these specialists to gain priceless experience and help direct me to a field I am passionate about."

-Chris Hobson, Big Sky Watershed AmeriCorps member

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 may be updated by the Commission to evaluate progress and work toward achieving goals. Public comments regarding the 2022-2024 State Service Plan are welcome anytime in the three-year period, email 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 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 benefitting 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 how to further 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.

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