



Photo: Montana Commission on Community Service Commissioners, GOCS staff, and Director Sarah R. Sadowski.

# State Service Plan

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This State Service Plan is a three-year framework for national service and community volunteerism in Montana, and includes recommendations relating to service needs and opportunities for Montanans age 55+. It is a requirement of AmeriCorps the agency (45 CFR 2550.80) and the State of Montana. This plan is informed by the 2024 Community Needs Assessment described below, the Montana State Plan on Aging for the time period October 1, 2023 to September 30, 2027 (“[Plan on Aging](#)”), the [Montana State Health Improvement Plan 2019-2023](#), data from the [Montana Census and Economic Information Center](#), [AmeriCorps](#) resources, and annual plans and surveys from various Montana state agencies.

Established in 1993, the Governor’s Office of Community Service (GOCS) and the Montana Commission on Community Service (Commission) promote AmeriCorps service and community volunteerism. This continues the United States’ long tradition of national service including the Civilian Conservation Corps formed in the 1930s; the establishment in the 1960s of the Peace Corps, Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), and Senior Corps; and acts in the 1990s and 2000s creating and adapting what is now known as AmeriCorps. The Montana Community Service Act (90-14-101, MCA, et seq.) established the Commission to support GOCS, which is attached to the Montana Department of Labor and Industry Commissioner’s Office for administrative purposes only. For more on the history of national service in the United States and Montana, visit [serve.mt.gov/who-we-are/](http://serve.mt.gov/who-we-are/).

Summarizing the purposes identified in 90-14-103, MCA, GOCS:

- *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 all communities; and*
- *Works to promote and expand volunteer opportunities for all Montanans.*



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### AS ONGOING ACTIVITIES, GOCS:

- ▶ Serves as a pass-through funder for AmeriCorps State grants, and provides relevant training, oversight, and other supports to ensure program success and compliance;
- ▶ Promotes national service in all AmeriCorps streams including VISTA, AmeriCorps National, AmeriCorps State, AmeriCorps Seniors, and National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC);
- ▶ Hosts the annual ServeMontana Symposium, bringing together AmeriCorps members from across Montana for networking and in-service training;
- ▶ Administers ServeMontana Awards to recognize exceptional community volunteers, in partnership with the Montana Credit Union Network;
- ▶ Administers Youth Serve Montana Scholarships for high school students who have engaged in volunteering, in partnership with Reach Higher Montana and Montana Campus Network for Civic Engagement (MCNCE);
- ▶ Promotes volunteerism by Montana college students with Student Volunteer Awards, in partnership with MCNCE;
- ▶ Promotes organ donation education and outreach in partnership with Montana’s Motor Vehicle Division and LifeCenter Northwest, and honors organ donors’ families through Gift of Life ceremonies each April; and
- ▶ Works toward installation of an organ donor memorial pursuant to 2-17-819, MCA.

### FOCUS AREAS, SPECIAL INITIATIVES, AND PRIORITIES

#### AmeriCorps Focus Areas and special initiatives adopted by Montana:

- Economic Opportunity
- Education
- Environmental Stewardship
- Disaster Services
- Healthy Futures
- Veterans and Military Families
- Capacity Building
- Employers of National Service
- National Days of Service
- Eli Segal Education Award Match

#### Governor and First Lady priorities adopted by GOCS:

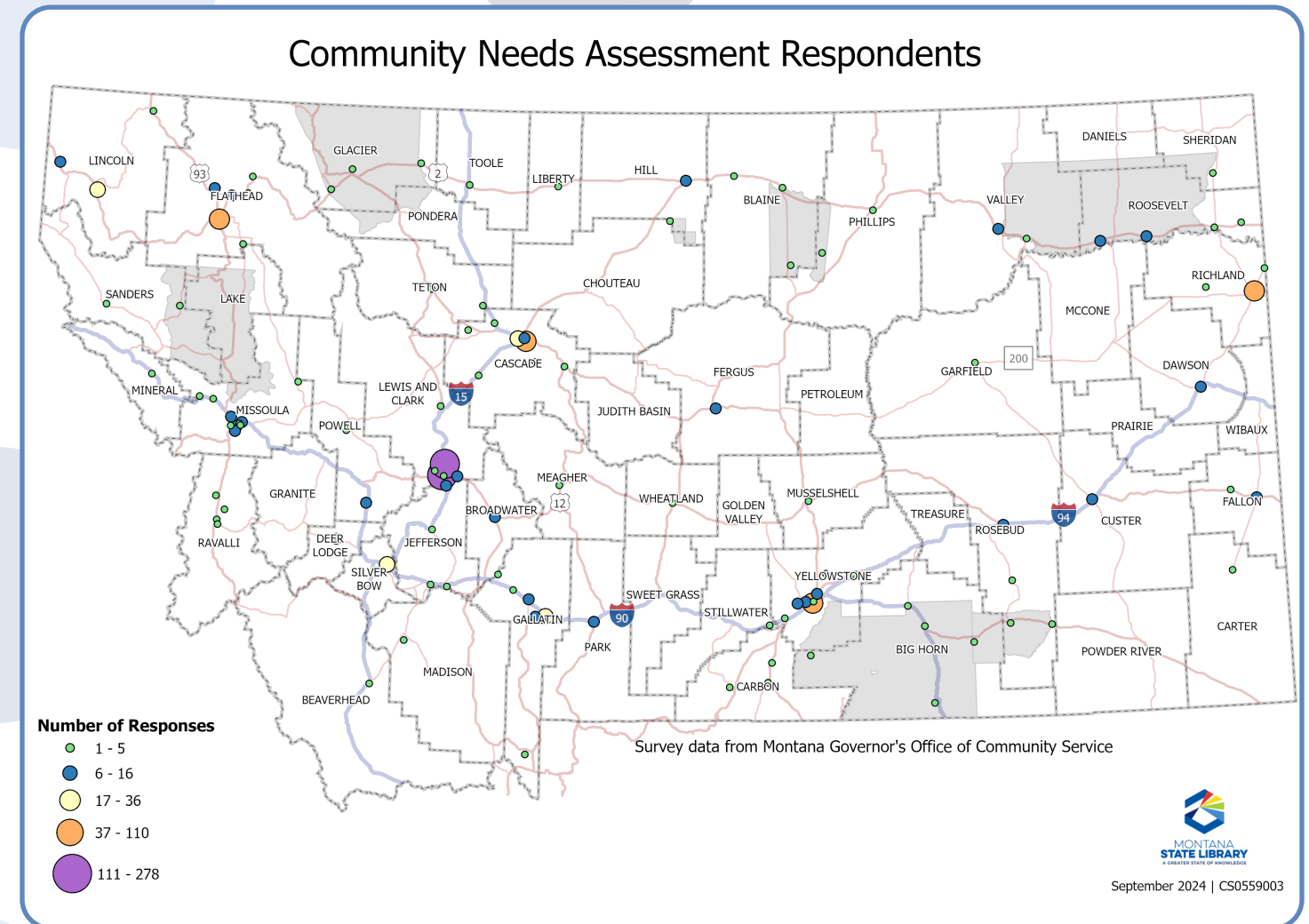
- Partner with Tribal Nations
- Improve Education and Empower Montana’s Workforce
- Reduce Barriers to Employment
- Increase Opportunities for Veterans
- Increase Access to Mental Health Care
- Boost Literacy and STEM Education
- Combat the Drug Epidemic
- Promote Stewardship of Montana’s Public Lands

### COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT DATA

From June to August 2024, 702 Montanans responded to the GOCS Community Needs Assessment. The Assessment asked Montanans to identify the three greatest needs facing communities in each AmeriCorps Focus Area.

Over one third of the respondents chose to submit optional demographic information. Over 93 percent of those respondents identify as white, 6% identify as Native American, and 1% identify as Hispanic or Latino. Approximately 70% of respondents were between the ages of 25 and 54, 25% of respondents were 55 or older, and 5% were age 25 or younger.

The map below represents the respondent’s locations :



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 Governor’s Office of Community Service in outreach, program development, technical assistance, and more. Source data is on file at GOCS.

## ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

The following are the most pressing needs in each Focus Area as identified by respondents to the Community Needs Assessment. Common responses to a question about other pressing needs include: **addressing homelessness and hunger, additional mental health services, community clean-up, disability inclusion, and civic education.**

### ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

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

- **60%** Navigating housing-related programs and services.
- **39%** Building and repairing housing.
- **38%** Navigating public benefits programs (e.g., SNAP, Medicaid, LIEAP).

### AMERICAN INDIAN AFFAIRS

*Partnering with Tribal Nations*

- **40%** Outreach and education about mental health and substance abuse disorders.
- **28%** Navigating housing-related programs and services.
- **24%** Job training and/or workforce development.

### EDUCATION

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

- **51%** Coordinating and facilitating after-school programs.
- **42%** Supporting education for K-12 children (e.g., tutoring, mentoring in K-12 schools).
- **39%** Supporting early childhood education (e.g., Week of the Young Child events, developmental screening).

### HEALTHY FUTURES

*Positive health outcomes for all generations*

- **48%** Outreach and education about mental health and substance use disorders.
- **30%** Navigating public benefits programs (e.g., SNAP, Medicaid, LIEAP).
- **24%** Developing and implementing community activities to reduce isolation/loneliness.

## VETERANS & MILITARY FAMILIES

*Serving those who served us*

- **56%** Navigating veteran-specific programs (e.g., VA housing, VA Medical, and VA disability).
- **45%** Outreach and education about military and veteran related mental health (e.g., PTSD, substance use disorders).
- **29%** Navigating programs and services for servicemembers and veterans with disabilities.
- **28%** Assisting veterans in transition to civilian workforce (e.g., job search, skills development).

### MONTANANS AGE 55+

*Serving legacy Montanans*

- **44%** Navigating programs and services to help seniors age in place.
- **38%** Developing and implementing community activities to reduce isolation/loneliness.
- **34%** Coordinating volunteers to assist in transporting seniors to errands and appointments.

### LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

*Protecting and utilizing our greatest resources*

- **42%** Wildfire prevention and mitigation (e.g., fuels reduction, clearing natural debris).
- **34%** Building and maintaining trails.
- **26%** Assessing the status of public lands and waters (e.g., water testing, surveying public lands use).
- **26%** Noxious weed and other plant-life management (e.g., removing invasive species plants).

### DISASTER SERVICES

*Mitigating and preparing for disaster situations*

- **44%** Wildfire prevention and mitigation (e.g., clearing natural debris, prescribed burns).
- **42%** Developing community safety and disaster response plans.
- **31%** Education and outreach about disaster prevention and response (e.g., wildfire prevention, earthquake response).
- **31%** Recruiting and training community volunteers for disaster preparation or response.



### OBJECTIVE 1

EXPAND AND PROMOTE NATIONAL SERVICE AND GOCS ACTIVITIES.

#### GOAL A

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



#### STRATEGIES

1 Consider potential technological solutions in relation to updating and improving GOCS operational resources, including but not limited to calendars, monitoring tools, communications plans, grants management, succession plans, procedures, process manuals, and project plans.

2 Incorporate needs assessment data into internal operational resources and communications with grantees and other stakeholders, including topical priorities in funding announcements.

3 Explore new funding sources such as grants and sponsorships and avenues such as authorized funds to solicit and receive funding to promote statewide national service, volunteerism and civic engagement.



#### MEASURES

Update at least two GOCS operational resources per year, documenting consideration of technological solutions to improve efficiency or effectiveness.

Provide at least two communications per year to grantees and other stakeholders regarding priorities identified in assessment, including documented outreach to entities that may plan for, implement, or adapt programs to meet identified needs.

Either pursue funding or document reasons for not pursuing two new funding sources per year.

*Life's most persistent and urgent question is,*

*'What are you doing for others?'*

*- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*



### OBJECTIVE 2

CONDUCT OUTREACH AND EDUCATION TO INCREASE NUMBER OF REGISTERED ORGAN DONORS IN MONTANA.

#### GOAL A

Promote organ donor registration, and honor organ donors and their families.



#### STRATEGIES

1 Conduct outreach and secure donations to raise \$500,000 needed to install and maintain an organ donor memorial pursuant to 2-17-819, MCA.

2 As efforts toward installing and maintaining an organ donor memorial on Capitol grounds continue, ensure that existing "Trees of Life" honoring organ donors are publicly displayed in a manner accessible to families and to people interested in becoming organ donors.



#### MEASURES

Dollars raised, as tracked by the Helena Area Community Foundation, the fiscal sponsor.

Trees of Life including leaves with donors' names are accessible in visible locations, which may include Motor Vehicle Division offices or Capitol grounds, and family inquiries regarding the location of a deceased person's leaf are timely addressed.



#### Organ Donor Memorial

Learn more and donate:



Threshold of Life memorial design by Ken VanDeWalle



serve.mt.gov/commission-initiatives/Organ-Donation-and-Memorial



### OBJECTIVE 3

PROMOTE VOLUNTEERISM AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OF MONTANANS OF ALL AGES.

#### GOAL A

Increase nominations for ServeMontana Awards and fully award available resources for Youth Serve Montana scholarship programs.



#### STRATEGIES

1 Explore potential partnerships with businesses and other entities to enhance existing efforts, such as allowing ServeMontana award recipients to designate a monetary award to the nonprofit or charity of their choice.

2 Cultivate youth service by expanding outreach about Youth Serve Montana scholarships, college Student Volunteer Awards, and other youth service opportunities and acknowledgments.



#### MEASURES

At least one partnership explored per year, with documented outcome.

Development and implementation of annual youth service communications plan targeting youth and people who work or volunteer with youth, including at least one communication per year toward the target audience. The youth-specific plan may be part of an overall GOCS communications plan.



#### ServeMontana Awards

Learn more and nominate someone for a ServeMontana Award:



[serve.mt.gov/commission-initiatives/](https://serve.mt.gov/commission-initiatives/)



From left to right: GOCS Director Sarah R. Sadowski, Montana Commission on Community Service Commissioner Thomas Risberg, Lieutenant Governor Kristen Juras, and Montana's Credit Unions' Chief Advocacy Officer Karen Smith.



### SUPPLEMENTAL SERVICE PLAN FOR MONTANANS AGE 55+

In accordance with 45 CFR 2550.80(m), and having reviewed the Plan on Aging and other research in the current knowledge base regarding the economic and social impact of the roles of workers age 55+ and the health and social benefits of active engagement for adults age 55+, this supplemental service plan for service by adults age 55 or older makes the following recommendations:

1 In AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps Seniors programs across Montana, incorporate research on intergenerational service and relationships (e.g., CoGenerate's Generations Serving Together project) to share best practices and promote national service and volunteer opportunities for seniors.

2 In light of 8 of 10 respondents to a survey underlying the Plan on Aging stating they participate in some kind of volunteerism, explore opportunities for senior Montanans to (1) share their experiences and values relating to volunteerism with other generations, (2) engage in activities tailored to particular interests such as veteran populations and outdoor experiences, and (3) consider AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps Seniors programs as a means of service and cultivating skills.

3 With respect to the Montana Aging Services Bureau and Area Agencies on Aging:

A Collaborate with GOCS and AmeriCorps grantees and subrecipients in Montana to consider whether and how AmeriCorps members and volunteers could serve to address needs and strategies set forth in the Plan on Aging, including but not limited to assisting Senior Centers with emergency preparedness and planning, expanding marketing and outreach about wellness and available services, and addressing issues and topics identified during a 2022 Tribal Consultation conducted in the development of the Plan on Aging.

B Incorporate AmeriCorps opportunities and services into any marketing outreach plan to businesses, nonprofit organizations, the Office of Public Instruction, institutions of higher education, and other State agencies.

4 Share funding opportunities as appropriate and relevant to the above recommendations.



AmeriCorps State Program Directors and GOCS staff at the annual Program Director's Convening, August 2024.

**EXTERNAL FACTORS**

The Commission and GOCS recognize many factors may change over the three-year period of this State Service Plan, such as funding, demographics, natural disasters, technologies, and priorities identified by AmeriCorps, the Governor, and the Montana Legislature. Factors that affected the development of this plan include Montana's status as a rural and underserved state, its geographic size, the relative lack of philanthropic funding resources, and social media limiting GOCS's efforts to boost and advertise plan-related outreach efforts.

**CONCLUSION**

This State Service Plan guides the mission delivery of GOCS and the Commission, as 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 by the Commission to evaluate progress and work toward achieving goals. Public comments regarding the 2025-2027 State Service Plan may be submitted anytime 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 be a strategy in addressing our most significant community needs outlined throughout the State Service Plan. The Commission, Governor's Office of Community Service, AmeriCorps Office of Regional Operations, national service programs, nonprofits, government organizations, businesses, educational institutions, and other stakeholders must all work together to make meaningful impacts 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 2025-2027 Montana State Service Plan was approved by Governor Greg Gianforte on INSERT DATE pursuant to the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act (Public Law 111-13).



  
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 Greg Gianforte  
 Governor of Montana

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

GOCS appreciates our partners and the diverse support leading to ensuring that 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 it takes collective efforts 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 GOCS or support the Montana AmeriCorps family, or if you just want to share ideas and learn more about what we do, contact us!

**Montana Governor's Office of Community Service**

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## SUMMARY OF OBJECTIVES, GOALS, STRATEGIES, AND MEASURES



This summary paraphrases the objectives, goals, strategies, measures, and recommendations more fully described in the 2025-27 State Service Plan. It is intended for ease of reference and may be used and updated to track progress.

OBJECTIVES	GOALS	STRATEGIES	MEASURES
<b>1</b> Expand and promote national service and GOCS activities.	Optimize GOCS infrastructure.	1. Consider technological solutions.	Document consideration of technology solutions in updating two GOCS operational resources per year.
		2. Incorporate needs assessment data in funding announcements and other communications.	Two communications per year addressing needs assessment.
		3. Explore new funding sources.	Document exploration of two funding sources per year.
<b>2</b> Increase organ donor registration.	Promote and honor organ donation.	1. Raise \$500,000 for Gift of Life memorial.	Dollars raised.
		2. Ensure existing "Trees of Life" are publicly accessible.	Display of trees. Timely addressing inquiries.
<b>3</b> Promote volunteerism and civic engagement.	Enhance ServeMontana Awards and Youth Serve Montana scholarship programs.	1. Explore partnerships.	Documented exploration of one partnership per year.
		2. Expand outreach about youth service.	Annual youth service communications plan including one targeted communication per year.

### SUPPLEMENTAL SERVICE PLAN FOR MONTANANS AGE 55+

Recommendations:

- 1 Share best practices in light of intergenerational service research.
- 2 Explore opportunities to share and engage in service opportunities.
- 3 Recommend the Montana Aging Services Bureau (A) consider AmeriCorps strategies and (B) include AmeriCorps in any marketing plan.
- 4 Share relevant funding opportunities.



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