

Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service - State Service Plan

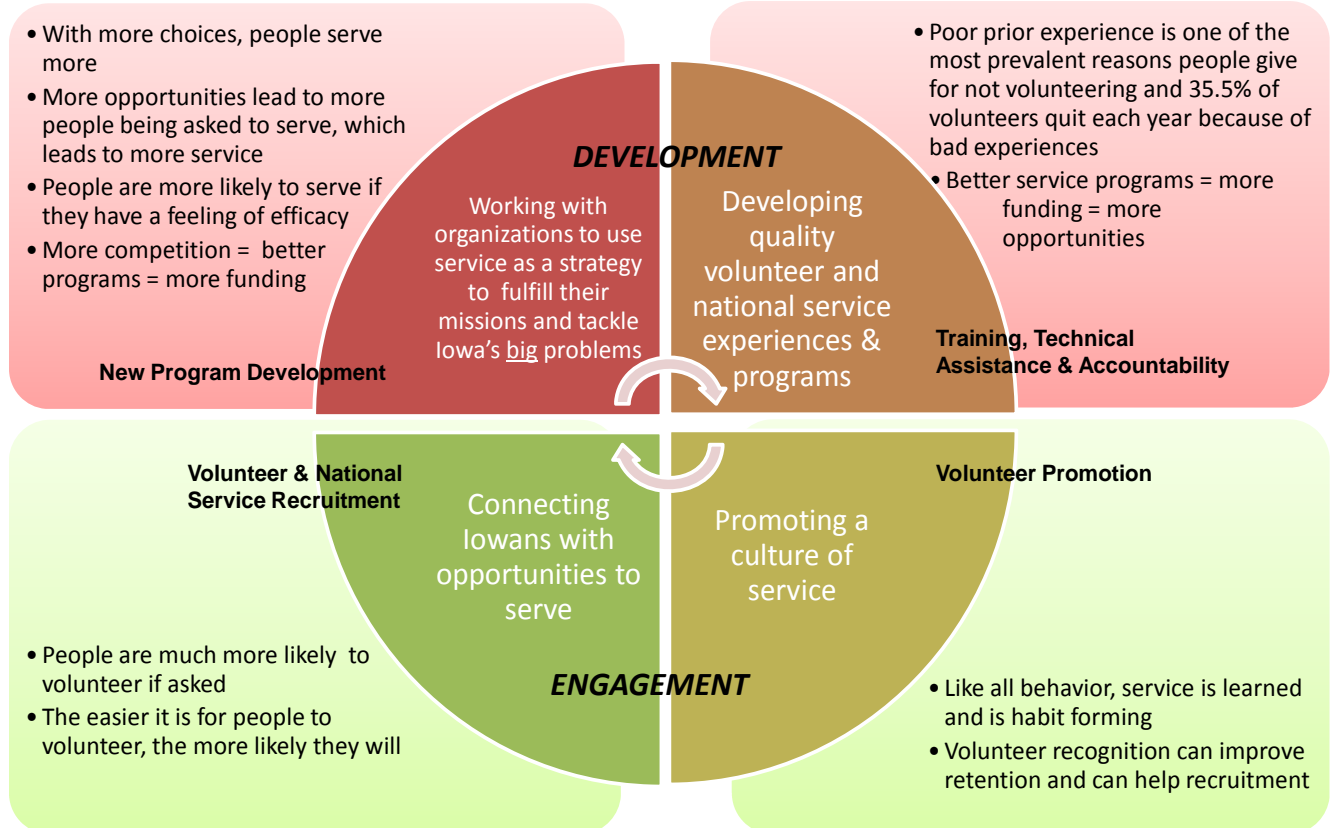
A Blue Print for Building on Iowa's Ethic of Service

Vision:

To create an Iowa where all citizens are empowered through service to meet community challenges and make lives better.

Mission:

To improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering.



The Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service (ICVS) and its partner agencies work with organizations on two main fronts. The first is to help them develop quality programs that use service as a strategy to fulfill their missions and address Iowa's greatest areas of need. The second is helping organizations employ strategies to engage Iowans in their communities.

ICVS will use its resources and partnerships to fulfill strategies outlined in this plan. The plan is broken up into the components shown above: 1) New Program Development; 2) Training, Technical Assistance & Accountability; 3) Volunteer Promotion; and, 4) Volunteer & National Service Recruitment.

DEVELOPMENT

1) NEW PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT – Working with Organizations and Communities to Use Service as a Strategy

One of the primary functions of the ICVS is to work with organizations and communities to help them use service as a strategy to fulfill their mission and to engage Iowans in solving a community's most pressing challenges. We have done this by connecting those in need with programming that we or our partners fund, or by providing technical assistance on how to utilize volunteers in a community to fulfill that need. Programming and strategies we have utilized in the past to help engage Iowans in meeting local needs include: AmeriCorps*State, AmeriCorps*National, AmeriCorps*VISTA, AmeriCorps*NCCC, RSVP, Senior Companion Program, Foster Grand Parents, Iowa Mentoring Partnership-certified Mentoring Programs, Communities of Promise, Iowa's Promise Youth Service Grants, K-12 Learn & Serve (Iowa Department of Education ComServe Grants), Community Based Learn & Serve, Volunteer Center start up training, college volunteer and service learning program development, Volunteer Reception Center start up training, and volunteer program development training. With the passing of new service legislation in 2009 at the state and national levels, many new tools and programs will be available to create more volunteer service opportunities in Iowa. New programs include: Iowa Green Corps, Opportunity Corps, Education Corps, Health Corps, Veterans Corps, Iowa Summer Youth Corps, Summer of Service Grants, Encore Fellows, Silver Scholars, Serve America Fellows, a Volunteer Generation Fund, a Social Innovation Fund, and more. This new programming, along with new flexibility to utilize other funding streams to support service programs, all make new program development a vital piece of Iowa's State Service Plan.

The mission of the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service directs us to increase the rate of volunteerism in Iowa, as well as to use service to "improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement." Research has shown that a volunteers' perceived ability to make a difference towards real problems (efficacy) directly correlates with their level of engagement in a community. In other words, the bigger the need, and the more directly a volunteer experience is addressing the need, the more likely people will be willing to help. In addition, we know service itself can improve the life of the recipient and can strengthen a community by building a bond between the community and its residents. These fortified ties can help communities retain residents who will improve the community.

ICVS will provide help to any organization that wants to use service to improve lives and strengthen communities. We have created strategies for volunteer generation outlined throughout this plan and priorities for new program development that we will target in dedicating our resources. Priority is given to: 1) Iowa's most pressing needs; 2) engaging Iowans that will have high "returns on investment"; 3) developing programs in areas that are most likely to be successful; and, 4) addressing the geographic areas most in need.

Priorities and Strategies

a) Environment

- i) **Objective:** Building sustainable communities and preserving our natural resources
- ii) **New Program Development Priority Areas:** Energy conservation/efficiency, water quality and retention
- iii) **Rationale:**
 - (1) The natural disasters of 2008 have created a tremendous need and opportunity to leverage federal, state, local, and private funding to rehab and rebuild Iowa homes and community facilities in a highly energy efficient and sustainable manner. The benefits of rehabbing and constructing in a more energy efficient and sustainable manner include:
 - (a) Lower operating costs for home owners and local governments

- (b) Advancement towards Iowa energy independence goals
 - (c) Lower greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions
 - (d) More construction trades members with sustainable design and construction skills experience
 - (e) Healthier and more durable commercial and residential buildings
 - (f) Implementation of stormwater best management practices to reduce flooding
 - (2) Buildings nationwide account for 71% of all electricity use and generate 38% of all greenhouse gas emissions. Low-income home energy assistance program (LIHEAP) recipients in Iowa spend 11-12% of their income on energy, four to five times the amount non low-income Iowans spend. More than 250,000 investor-owned utility customers were behind on bill payments at one time this past winter. Energy use in Iowa increased 8.6% from 1995 to 2004 and is estimated to increase another 31% by 2025. This is clearly not a direction that is going to lead Iowa to energy independence or to meeting our greenhouse gas emission reduction goals.
 - (3) More than 300 Iowa waterways are impaired, with nonpoint source pollution being a major cause of impairments. Projects that promote and implement stormwater best management practices can improve water quality, improve community aesthetics and promote the restoration of preferred hydrologic performance in Iowa.
- iv) Potential Strategies:**
- (1) Establish AmeriCorps*VISTAs in Iowa communities to coordinate energy efficiency and conservation projects and recruit volunteers
 - (2) Expand number of AmeriCorps members serving communities with energy efficiency and conservation activities
 - (a) Expand AmeriCorps programs in Iowa to implement more energy efficiency/conservation projects and stormwater best management practices
 - (b) Partner with YouthBuild/youth corps programs to train a future green workforce and teach best practices for energy efficiency, energy conservation, and sustainable site planning for stormwater management
 - (c) Increase outreach to RSVP programs to participate in and recruit additional volunteers for community energy and water quality related projects
 - (d) Incorporate energy efficiency, energy conservation and stormwater best practices (rain gardens, rain barrels, green roofs, bioretention cells, native plantings, etc.) into Summer of Service training and community service opportunities
 - (e) Recruit participants and recent graduates of the new Sustainable Building certificate program at Iowa community colleges to become AmeriCorps members and to provide training to those involved in community service
 - (f) Use Summer of Service environmental service learning opportunities to lay the foundation for members to enter local programming, then begin the sustainable building certificate program at Iowa community college building trades programs, and move into trades apprenticeships. This chain will eventually culminate in full-time life-long careers supporting energy efficiency, energy conservation, stormwater best practices and lifelong community service — a model approach to growing green jobs and the green economy
 - (g) Utilize Volunteer Centers, college civic engagement programs/offices, RSVPs & employer volunteer programs, etc. to mobilize more volunteers for community sustainability projects
 - (3) Utilize programming to improve conservation and wildlife management of Iowa's public lands

b) Education & Youth Development

- i) **Objective:** Ensure that the 5 Promises—Healthy Start, Marketable Skills through Effective Education, Caring Adults, Safe Places, and Opportunities to Serve—are being met for all Iowa youth.

- ii) **New Program Development Priority Areas:** Dropout Prevention/Reconnection, School Achievement

- iii) **Rationale:** Despite ranking relatively well in overall graduation rates, the number of Iowa dropouts increased 23% for 2007-2008. In addition, Iowa has one of the largest graduation rate gaps in the country between African American and overall graduation rates. While Iowa consistently ranks above the national average in student achievement, Iowa has fallen in rank amongst peer states in several student achievement indicators over the last two decades.

- iv) **Potential Strategies:**
 - (1) Focus new Education Corps on reading and math proficiency by 3rd/4th grade and middle school intervention programming. Sustain engagement and learning through expansion of Service Learning opportunities both in school and community based settings (see Student Engagement Plan).
 - (2) Expand summer learning through summer enrichment programs like “Summer of Service”
 - (3) Foster the creation of structured places to continue positive influences and learning during out of school time
 - (4) Mobilize communities to be engaged with youth through community collaborations and utilize program models that engage communities and their resources to improve school achievement
 - (5) Promote communities, organizations, and schools becoming “Places of Promise”
 - (6) Ensure all young Iowans have access to a caring adult through a strong statewide network of mentoring programs
 - (7) Develop Youth Corps programming including specific program modeling, to reconnect with Iowa’s disadvantaged youth or dropouts:
 - (a) Work with communities to develop programming for high school dropouts aged 15-25 to earn their GED or diploma while learning hard and soft job skills and undergoing extensive on-site development through service. Typical funding sources include: YouthBuild funding with Employment Training Administration at the U.S. Department of Labor, Community Development Block Grant, Community Services Block Grant, AmeriCorps, local alternative education funding, etc.
 - (b) Develop Summer Youth Corps that targets disadvantaged or at-risk youth during the summer months to learn job skills, to develop as individuals, and to be in a structured, safe environment
 - (c) Explore other disadvantaged youth program models that current Iowa AmeriCorps programs could incorporate or other new program models that either utilize disadvantaged youth in service or provide service to disadvantaged youth.
 - (d) Coordinate with existing state level collaborations/coalitions (i.e. Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development Council, Iowa Mentoring Partnership, Iowa Afterschool Alliance) to ensure comprehensive and non-duplicative services.
 - (e) Connect with existing statewide youth advisory boards (State of Iowa Youth Action Committee, elevate, Just Eliminate Lies), along with local youth councils, to ensure that young people’s input helps shape programming that affects them.

c) **Economic Opportunity**

- i) **Objective:** Ensure all lowans have the opportunity for economic success and stability, and help communities fulfill their most pressing needs
- ii) **New Program Development Priority Areas:** Coordinating services to address the multiple barriers facing individuals living in poverty, addressing the unique challenges of rural poverty, rebuilding/rehabbing communities affected by natural disaster or economic hardship
- iii) **Rationale:** Many working lowans still struggle to meet their basic needs. More than 50% of jobs in Iowa pay a lower hourly wage than is necessary for a single parent of one child to support the family, and 88% of Iowa’s low-income children have parents who are working at least part-time. However, as families try to work their way out of poverty, they may find themselves worse off, as their increased income and assets make them ineligible for public services (National Center for Children in Poverty and Iowa Policy Project [IPP]). More workforce training is needed, because while the ten fastest growing jobs in Iowa require some postsecondary schooling, we rank 37th in the percentage of heads of household with a bachelor’s degree (IPP). Racial and ethnic minorities may comprise only a small percentage of Iowa’s workforce, but they are growing. Minority residents are much more likely to face language barriers to work (18.9% with poor or no English speaking skills) and are 3.6 times more likely than whites to lack a high school diploma or GED (Swenson & Eathington). Iowa’s rural residents face additional barriers to economic success because of their isolation from education, transportation, health, and community services. Finally, some Iowa communities are still struggling to recover from incidents such as natural disasters or manufacturer shut-downs that have magnified the economic problems already facing the state.
- iv) **Potential Strategies for Development:**
 - (1) Utilize programming and volunteers to help individuals navigate the service system and to take a leadership role in improving communication between state agencies.
 - (2) Develop programs to offer job training that address the additional barriers to employment faced by minorities, individuals with disabilities, persons with a criminal record, disadvantaged youth, and displaced workers
 - (3) Incorporate volunteers in programs that make advanced educational and job training opportunities available to low-income lowans at no or low cost
 - (4) Support programming that provides assistance to help mitigate the “cliff effects” individuals and families face when increased income does not make up for lost benefits
 - (5) Utilize volunteers, including national service participants, to provide financial literacy education to adults by connecting with them at the time they are making important financial decisions (filing taxes, purchasing a car or home, opening a checking or savings account)
 - (6) Develop programs to help individuals and families build assets through savings programs, such as individual development accounts (IDAs), and through quality mainstream financial services that are affordable and flexible, such as low-interest loans
 - (7) Utilize volunteers to improve access to services in rural areas through better transportation, technology, and mobility in service provision, especially for the elderly and homebound
 - (8) Develop and support programs that work with refugee and minority communities whose economic difficulties are multiplied by language or cultural barriers
 - (9) Mobilize the support of businesses, schools, and religious institutions when addressing community disasters (see sections on Disaster)
 - (10) Use programming to improve accessibility of legal services that address housing, employment, public benefits, or family issues
 - (11) Utilize national service participants to help prevent and resolve social problems that can impede economic success, such as child and domestic abuse

- (12) Develop programs that provide basic needs, such as improving housing options for low income lowans or addressing hunger in children and the elderly population
- (13) Provide transportation to connect lowans to essential services, educational opportunities, doctors appointments or other areas were lack of transportation is inhibiting economic opportunity
- (14) Developing programs that address public safety, community violence, and racism

d) Health

- i) **Objective:** Improve the overall health of lowans
- ii) **New Program Development Priority Areas:** Obesity and Chronic Health Conditions, Nutrition, Wellness, and Rural Healthcare
- iii) **Rationale:** Chronic health problems and nutrition issues, and the consequences of these issues, have a significant impact on an individual’s ability to be a productive member of society. It is a critical time to invest in programs that teach healthy habits to our children. We need to look ahead and start to make changes today so our communities (and our country) can be better off in the future (ISU Human Development & Family Studies Dept.). Iowa ranks among the worst states in the following health statistics: binge drinking rates, alcohol abuse/dependency, increase in pre-term birth rates, obesity, and resident population with serious mental illness. In addition, Iowa ranks near the bottom in ranking of home health services (Statemaster.com, Iowan Health Stats).
- iv) **Potential Strategies:**
 - (1) Increase access to medical care, particularly in rural areas and for elderly and young lowans. Engage a variety of techniques, such as mobile clinics, U.S. based medical missions, teen clinic models, transportation programs, and Community Health Centers
 - (2) Develop nutrition programs focused on prevention of obesity, including education and outreach, access to fresh fruits and vegetables through community gardens, and improved food choices at schools and low income or rural areas
 - (3) Engage and retain Iowa-trained health care professionals, and bring trained professionals from other areas to the state through innovative and compelling service opportunities. Examples include: community health corps, Iowa-based medical missions, targeted outreach to communities, medical outreach
 - (4) Support community wellness programs focused on prevention and education, increased physical activity and innovative community recreation opportunities, such as Yoga in the Park, Tai Chi for Seniors, or a “Wellness Olympics”
 - (5) Support health, prevention, information dissemination and outreach programs, such as: drug and alcohol abuse prevention, community mental illness awareness, and education around other important health and prevention issues. Education and outreach activities may be focused on specific underserved populations and targeted communities with specific health-related issues
 - (6) Assist with development of trails including urban trails to promote walking and biking

e) Veterans

- i) **Objective:** Meet unmet needs of veterans, members of the Armed Forces who are on active duty, and their families.
- ii) **New Program Development Priority Areas:** Programs benefiting or utilizing veterans, with a priority on disabled veterans
- iii) **Rationale:**
 - (1) Unemployment among post-9/11 veterans is nearly 3% higher than civilians
 - (2) Nearly one-quarter of the homeless population nationally are veterans
 - (3) Up to 20% of Iraq veterans and 11% of Afghanistan veterans suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

iv) **Potential Strategies:**

- (1) Developing Veterans Corps programs that promote community-based efforts to meet the unique needs of military families while a family member is deployed and upon that family member's return home
- (2) Recruiting veterans, particularly returning veterans, into service opportunities, including opportunities that utilize their military experience
- (3) Developing programs that work to assist veterans in accessing educational opportunities, including opportunities for professional certification, licensure, and credentialing. This will include coordinating activities with and assisting state and local agencies administering veterans education benefits and veterans programs with internships and fellowships that could lead to employment in the private and public sector
- (4) Promoting community efforts to serve the needs of veterans and members of the Armed Forces who are on active duty, including helping veterans file benefits claims and assisting federal agencies in providing services to veterans
- (5) Assisting veterans in developing mentoring relationships with economically disadvantaged students
- (6) Developing projects to assist veterans with disabilities and older veterans, including assisting veterans in rural areas with their transportation needs

f) **Programs or strategies that engage the following populations in service (also see Volunteer and National Service Recruitment section):**

- i) Students
- ii) Disadvantaged Youth
- iii) Iowans 55+
- iv) Disabled Iowans

g) **Geographic areas that are underserved or are highest need areas for each issue area**

h) **Programs that are part of a comprehensive community strategy**

i) **Programs that operate as intermediary organizations for rural/smaller community programming**

j) **Programs or organizations that build the volunteer infrastructure in Iowa such as volunteer referral centers or clearinghouses**

DEVELOPMENT

2) TRAINING, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY – Developing Quality National Service and Volunteer Experiences and Programs

Most fields have a debate between quality vs. quantity: should time be spent on creating more programs or better programs? The ICVS feels that, for service, there is not an issue of quality vs. quantity; rather the data is quite clear that the best way to develop quantity (whether it be number of volunteers, number of national service opportunities, or number of service programs) is to develop quality service opportunities and programs. We know that better programs create better volunteer/national service retention rates and, with 35.5% of traditional volunteers and more than 15% of national service participants leaving their service early, we know that increasing retention rates through better screening, placement and volunteer management is one of the most efficient ways to increase service in Iowa. In addition, because most growth in service and volunteer programs requires some funding, nearly all of the expansion funds—whether government or private—are competitive, and quality and efficacy in addressing a need are what drives funding decisions. In other words, better quality = more volunteers, programs, and opportunities in Iowa.

Strategies:

- a) Increase Use of Effective Volunteer Management Practices to Improve Volunteer Recruitment, Retention, Performance and Recognition**
 - i) Evaluate and support development of standards of excellence and assessment for volunteer management
 - ii) Expand the number of organizations providing local technical assistance and training to volunteer managers
 - iii) Explore using volunteer rating services or have a “rate your volunteer experience” function on www.volunteeriowa.org to incent organizations to provide quality experiences
 - iv) Evaluate and support development of an effective volunteer management toolkit
 - v) Collect and disseminate data on status of volunteer management within Iowa’s nonprofit organizations
 - vi) Work to include volunteer management as a track within nonprofit management trainings
 - vii) Elevate the status of volunteer management as a profession
 - (1) Increase the awareness of the number of paid volunteer managers in the state and their value
 - (2) Increase participation in local volunteer manager networking groups for best-practice sharing, networking and other opportunities
 - (3) Work with colleges to promote volunteer management training in curricula coursework
 - (4) Continue to support volunteer management conferences in Iowa
 - (5) Evaluate development of standards of excellence for volunteer management professionals
 - (6) Support and promote volunteer management certification programs
 - (7) Build awareness and understanding within national service programs of program directors’ role (and some members’ role) as volunteer managers
 - viii) Explore volunteer placement/referral strategies that manage volunteers and place them with organizations in need, which can provide quality control and pool volunteer management resources among nonprofits

- b) Train National Service Program Directors, interested Volunteer Managers and AmeriCorps Members in Disaster Preparedness and Response**
 - i) Sponsor and/or support all national service programs in providing training to interested members and program staff, to ensure all interested and adequately trained members are mobilized for local, state and national disasters.
 - (1) Partner, as appropriate, with AmeriCorps*NCCC on training
 - ii) Provide, as reasonable, training to Iowa national service programs (AmeriCorps State & National, AmeriCorps*VISTA, Senior Corps and Learn & Serve).
 - iii) Provide or make available, as reasonable, training to interested volunteer management professionals (including on-line training).

- c) Expand Resources to Strengthen Capacity of Nonprofit Organizations, Schools, Faith Communities and State & Federal Government Agencies in Engaging Volunteers to Solve Challenges in Iowa**
 - i) Evaluate potential resources, such as grants, fee-for-service, state volunteer license plates, volunteerism check-off, etc.
 - ii) Advocate and support legislative efforts to increase funding to Iowa's organizations that utilize volunteers to accomplish their charitable missions

- d) Support Quality Mentoring Programs through the Iowa Mentoring Partnership (IMP) including:**
 - i) Program certification based on the National Mentoring Partnerships' *Elements of Effective Practice*.
 - ii) Resources and technical assistance
 - (1) Training and conference events sponsored by the IMP each spring and fall on best practices and the *Elements of Effective Practice*
 - (2) Funding available to certified programs through the Iowa Department of Public Health
 - (3) Networking to foster discussion and the sharing of best practices between mentoring professionals

- e) Support Quality Comprehensive Youth Development Collaborations through Iowa's Communities of Promise Program and the 100 Best Communities for Young People**

- f) Support All National Service Programs through Quality Training, Moving Forward with the Goals to Build Stronger Programs and Experiences for Volunteers and National Service Members**
 - i) Conduct program needs assessment
 - ii) Develop training and technical assistance plan

- g) Strengthen National Service Programs through Strong Program Management**
 - i) Ensure solid program management through program monitoring
 - ii) Provide assistance and management to ensure quality volunteer and AmeriCorps Member experiences
 - iii) Ensure programs are meeting community needs and achieving results through assessment or performance measures

ENGAGEMENT

3) Volunteer Promotion – Building a Culture of Service

Like most behaviors, service and volunteerism are learned and are very much influenced by cultural norms and expectations. According to new research done for the most recent “Volunteering in America” report, non-volunteers see volunteers as people “different from themselves”. Yet, in actuality, volunteering is spread out among all ages and demographics. This confirms ICVS’s belief that we need to demonstrate that service and volunteering are something in which all active citizens can and should participate. Therefore, we have outlined strategies that will: 1) help engage people in service early in life; 2) provide episodic volunteer opportunities to engage people in service for perhaps the first time; and, 3) help build a cultural expectation of service and community engagement. As was evident by the record numbers of volunteers following 9/11 and President Bush’s State of the Union call for service, and more recently President Obama’s call to service, it is clear that setting a public expectation for service works. We also know that if volunteers feel valued and are properly recognized, they are more likely to continue to volunteer and their friends and family are more likely to be engaged in service opportunities.

Strategies

a) Utilize Marketing and Media to Increase Awareness of Volunteerism

- i) Develop and continually update marketing materials for statewide distribution (website, brochures, newsletters, press release templates, faith community bulletin articles, blogs)
 - (1) Develop value of volunteering messaging
 - (a) To Individuals
 - (i) K-12 Students
 - (ii) College Students
 - (iii) Working Adults
 - (iv) 55+ Iowans
 - (v) Persons with Disabilities
 - (b) To businesses
 - (c) To nonprofit organizations/agencies/faith communities
 - (d) To communities and state
 - (2) Partner with AmeriCorps*NCCC to create high visibility projects
 - (3) Develop media campaign around Days of Service and other volunteer-related data:
 - (a) Governor’s Proclamation
 - (b) Press Release
 - (c) Press around national volunteer data
 - (4) Distribute marketing materials to local sites that reach a broad audience, such as libraries, community centers, schools, and senior meal sites

b) Statewide Volunteer Recognition Efforts

- i) Evaluate, coordinate, and sponsor, in conjunction with the Governor’s Office, statewide volunteer recognition awards, including the Iowa Volunteer Hall of Fame and the Governor’s Volunteer Awards
- ii) Promote national volunteer awards, including Presidential Service Awards, Prudential Spirit of Service Awards, Daily Points of Light Award, etc. to highlight the important role volunteers play in improving Iowa’s communities

- iii) Support mentor recognition opportunities, including certificates of appreciation to Iowa Mentoring Partnership-certified programs
- c) Explore Creation of Volunteering License Plate that could be a Local Fundraiser for Service Programs and Link People to the Statewide Volunteer Web-Portal**
- d) Evaluate Existence of and Provide Support for Specific Statewide Volunteerism Efforts, such as a State Corporate Volunteer Program Committee, Board Referral System, Board Member Training Program, College Student Engagement Committee or other activities**
- e) Conduct Promotion Events in conjunction with National Mentoring Month, Volunteer Awareness Day, Thank Your Mentor Day, AmeriCorps Week, Service Learning Challenge, Global Youth Service Day, National Volunteer Week, and Mentoring Day on the Hill**
- f) Expand K-20 Service & Service Learning Opportunities (see Student Engagement Plan)**
- g) Explore Ways to Increase Family Volunteering**
- h) Work with Governor, Lt. Governor & First Lady to Promote Service and Service Opportunities**
- i) Advocate to Policy Makers and Local, State & Federal Officials about the Potential for Using Service as a Strategy to Solve some of Iowa's Most Pressing Problems**

ENGAGEMENT

4) VOLUNTEER & NATIONAL SERVICE RECRUITMENT – Connecting Iowans with Opportunities to Serve

It is an accepted principle of volunteer management that people are more likely to volunteer if they are asked. The 2009 “Volunteering in America” report added a new nuance, showing that non-volunteers would be much more likely to volunteer if asked by a trusted source or friend. This tells us that we not only need to ask Iowans to serve, but we also need to increase and diversify our recruiters and connect with people closer to home. We have outlined strategies that utilize more Iowans to ask people.

We also know that people are more likely to volunteer if they have choices and if it is easy for them to find out how they can help; this is especially true in times of disaster. We now have a statewide web-based recruitment portal that can be utilized by volunteer service programs to post their opportunities and can aggregate the postings of other volunteer referral agency websites, giving Iowans more service choices. Our plan includes strategies for marketing the web-portal www.volunteeriowa.org and ensuring opportunities are available across Iowa.

Finally, the 2009 report also indicated that many non-volunteers are afraid to make a long term commitment to volunteering, which suggests that promoting episodic volunteering options to get them engaged may be fruitful in engaging more Iowans. Iowa has many episodic volunteer needs, especially with the recovery effort from the flooding of 2008 far from complete. So, we have included many strategies in this plan to engage Iowans without requiring any long term commitment.

We have also listed specific strategies for volunteers whose engagement in service is of extra value. For at-risk youth and Iowans with disabilities we feel service will pay extra dividends by increasing future employment success and long term outcomes. Iowans over 55 years of age and students are populations that are at or approaching transitional periods of life—graduation or retirement—which are the points Iowans are most likely to leave the state. We believe that service can offer an important remedy to the “brain drain” and the “gray drain”. By engaging people in their communities we can create bonds that graduation and retirement won’t break.

Strategies

- a) Promote Consistent Statewide Internet Referral System www.volunteeriowa.org**
 - i) Develop and utilize statewide marketing strategy for Web portal
 - ii) Conduct outreach to fill gaps and increase postings on portal

- b) Plan and Coordinate Events for National & Iowa “Days of Service” such as:**
 - i) September 11 Day of Service and Remembrance
 - ii) Martin Luther King Jr. Day
 - iii) Aaron Eilerts Day
 - iv) First Lady Mari Culver’s Shelter Awareness Day
 - v) Global Youth Service Day

- c) Assist in Promoting Organization-Specific Service Days (United Way Day of Caring, Hands On Day, etc.)**

- d) Expand Counties Served by Volunteer Referral/Placement Organizations (such as Volunteer Centers, United Ways, RSVPs, Information & Referral Centers, and others)**
 - i) Support and strengthen existing Volunteer Centers and other referral networks

- ii) Determine if other organizations are serving as community volunteer referral organizations (such as United Way, RSVP, Information & Referral Centers, Chambers of Commerce, hospital volunteer offices, faith communities, and others)
 - iii) Develop and support new Volunteer Centers
 - iv) Increase resources to Volunteer Centers and other networks to expand service areas
- e) Utilize Volunteers and National Service Members to Recruit Additional Volunteers Using Creative Methods like “Bring a Friend Day”**
- f) Work with Local Communities to Find Ways to Engage Residents in Service.**
- i) Promote “Cities of Service”, local calls to service
 - ii) Encourage communities to establish community based volunteer referral/coordination centers, county or community volunteerism coordinators
 - iii) Encourage local communities to designate staff and/or an agency to administer a local version of the state’s volunteer web portal www.volunteeriowa.org with a local aggregator website -“Volunteer Solutions Mini”.
- g) Create Local AmeriCorps Alums Chapters and Engage Them Actively in Recruiting Additional Volunteers**
- h) Create an Ambassadors’ Bureau comprised of AmeriCorps Alumni, Commissioners and Former Commissioners, and Friends of the Commission:**
- i) Utilize the Ambassadors as speakers to provide local presentations on national service and other volunteer opportunities
 - ii) Use the Ambassadors to organize regional outreach and information sessions about ICVS programs and assistance
- i) Utilize Social Media to Connect People with Opportunities to Serve**
- j) Connect People With Opportunities to Serve in Times of Disaster**
- i) Mobilization and Deployment Strategy for Disaster
 - (1) Develop mobilization plan for national service participants in Iowa that will enable members, program directors and/or commission staff to respond in case of local, state or national disasters
 - (2) Develop policies to address programmatic, financial, and administrative needs during disaster mobilization
 - (3) Determine level of involvement with appropriate disaster preparedness and response entities in the public and private sector
 - ii) Disaster Volunteer Management
 - (1) ICVS shall serve as lead agency for Volunteer Management in the Volunteer and Donations Management annex for the State of Iowa Disaster Plan
 - (2) Develop statewide volunteer disaster management tracking tool
 - (3) Coordinate disaster volunteer management needs and requests with local community agencies
 - (4) Market and outreach to local community agencies – Community and Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, Volunteer Centers, local Emergency Management Agencies, United Ways, and others involved in disaster response and recovery
 - (5) Support Volunteer Reception Center outreach, training, and implementation
 - (a) Evaluate and support training and technical assistance needs of Homeland Security Emergency Management (HSEMD), Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD), Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD), Volunteer Centers and other agencies that engage volunteers in disaster response

- iii) Act as liaison with the Governor’s Office for disaster volunteerism to include agencies active in disaster
- iv) Maintain active membership on the statewide Citizen Corps (Iowa Disaster Human Resource Council)

k) Encourage and Support Employer Volunteer Programs

- i) Meet with corporate leaders and business partners to encourage formation of Employee Volunteer programs
- ii) Provide Technical Assistance to businesses wishing to establish employee volunteer programs, including:
 - (1) Ask current volunteers to share their stories with those who have never volunteered. Answer “what’s in it for me?”
 - (2) Recommend providing/allowing opportunities that occur during work hours, are time efficient/easy to do in the available time, and seem valuable
 - (3) Provide training on how to best utilize Volunteer Solutions in a corporate setting
 - (4) Encourage a corporate attitude/expectation to “Pay it Forward”
- iii) Develop “Best Practices” guidebook for Corporate Employee Volunteer Programs, including:
 - (1) Paid time off to volunteer
 - (2) On site sign up (including internal Volunteer Solutions system)
 - (3) System to connect employees with resources and social services
 - (4) Considering volunteer activities during job evaluations
 - (5) Increasing corporate expectations for involvement
 - (6) Explanation that volunteering is not a meeting – it’s social interaction, community involvement, action oriented

l) Facilitate Mentoring Recruitment and Referrals through the ICVS’s Iowa Mentoring Partnership Website

- i) Allow potential mentors to search for mentoring opportunities in their communities or online using the framework created by Iowa Health Systems

m) Target populations that Have High Returns on Investment:

- i) **Volunteers Age 55 and up**
 - (1) Create policies to increase service by adults age 55 or older, including how to best use such adults as sources of social capital, and how to utilize their skills and experience to address community needs including:
 - (a) Explore utilization of ICVS Volunteer Solutions registration system to develop a “skill bank” for volunteers with life experiences that could better be utilized by charitable organizations across Iowa.
 - (b) Explore incentives like real property tax abatement for mature Iowans to volunteer, similar to programs already in existence in bordering states.
 - (2) Expand counties covered by Senior Corps programs to Increase volunteerism by individuals aged 55 and over
 - (a) Support expansion through potential resource development and exploration of additional resources
 - (b) Promote regular meetings and training
 - (c) Evaluate and seek grant and fee-for service resources as appropriate
 - (d) Evaluate and develop internship programs
 - (e) Explore use of VISTA to build capacity of Senior Corps
 - (f) Assess potential of additional state, federal or community foundation funds to expand service areas

- (3) Utilize targeted messaging and train existing programs on how best to recruit and utilize lowans age 55+
- (4) Partner with organizations currently serving lowans 55+ to recruit and develop opportunities to serve
- (5) Connect with colleges and universities with high numbers of non-traditional students
 - (a) Provide professional development regarding service learning as a pedagogy, so that it is utilized
- (6) Promote employer volunteer opportunities that can transition into retirement
- (7) Promote the value of targeting experienced lowans to local communities, both from a skill level perspective and a from a retention perspective
- (8) Train or provide materials to local communities on how to prepare citizens for and engage them in volunteer opportunities, including service on boards and commissions
- (9) Train organizations on how to create volunteer opportunities that demonstrate the return on their investment
- (10) Provide training or resources on how to post opportunities
 - (a) Statewide Volunteer Solutions online volunteer recruitment system
 - (b) Focus on benefits, not the features
- (11) Set goal of 10% of AmeriCorps members 55+
- (12) Explore incentive models utilized in other states
- (13) Partner with workforce or other programs targeting this demographic
- (14) Recommend the Iowa Department on Aging take specific action to better engage mature lowans in service, including:
 - (a) Develop a marketing plan to businesses encouraging:
 - (i) Time sharing or flexible work schedules for lowans over 55 that can keep employees in the work force longer and spark more volunteer service among this demographic.
 - (ii) Developing employer volunteer programs that include employees over 55, including making “pro-bono” connections for certain high need professions (Information Technology, Marketing, Tax Accountants, Legal etc.)
 - (iii) Conduct outreach to nonprofits, the Iowa Department of Education, Iowa Colleges and other state agencies to develop a list of high need volunteer positions that we can work to better connect our 55+ volunteers
- (15) Encourage and recommend the use of 55+ volunteers for civic engagement and multigenerational activities by making it a priority for new program development and in funding decisions including Afterschool programs, Mentoring, and other Intergenerational activities
- (16) Explore program models like Experience Corps, as well as work to expand existing Senior Corps programs through National Service funding like AmeriCorps or other new programs
- (17) Encourage the development of Encore service programs in the State through:
 - (i) Actively pursuing partnership opportunities with AARP, Iowa Department of Aging, and others to conduct outreach and explore ideas
 - (ii) Making programs that utilize 55+ a funding priority and new program development priority
 - (iii) Working with Iowa’s solid network of Senior Corps programs

ii) Students: K-12

- (1) Expand number of K-12 students practicing service-learning
 - (a) Support expansion of Learn and Serve America programs across Iowa
 - (b) Promote service-learning as an effective tool for educators (benefits include: real world experience, leadership opportunities, creativity, community involvement, connection to curricula, reflection/writing activities)
 - (c) Assist with expanding training resources for teachers, national service, and nonprofit organizations to incorporate service-learning in classrooms

- (i) Provide training resources to teachers to increase the number of teachers using service-learning techniques in their classrooms
- (ii) Incorporate service-learning techniques into appropriate National Service programs
- (iii) Provide training to other youth-serving nonprofit organizations in using service-learning as a technique in their programs
- (d) Develop curricula, toolkits and templates for use in service-learning environments
 - (i) Collect and make available curricula-based service-learning modules that can be shared with teachers to infuse service-learning into various school subject areas
 - (ii) Develop and disseminate service-learning materials to be used with various components of youth development (such as leadership, problem solving, public speaking, academic performance, safety, etc.)
- (e) Develop opportunities to increase community-based service-learning
 - (i) Assist with outreach to organizations that focus on youth development (i.e. faith-based, community, nonprofit organizations and the public sector)
 - 1. Determine potential collaborations with organizations to develop community-based service-learning
 - (ii) Promote service-learning as an effective technique to increase youths' understanding of issues and engage them in the community.
- (f) Expand number of K-12 students volunteering
 - (i) Support organizations focused on youth development and youth service
 - (ii) Assist with outreach and marketing to youth
 - (iii) Assist with expanding training resources for organizations to develop volunteer opportunities
 - (iv) Encourage Iowa K-12 schools to participate in volunteer/service projects or participate in "silver cord" program
 - (v) Expand Iowa's Promise Youth Service Grants

iii) Students: College & University

- (1) Increase the number of K-20 students participating in service-learning
 - (a) Expand number of undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in service-learning courses
 - (i) Support development of higher education Learn and Serve America opportunities
 - (ii) Support awareness, training, and development opportunities for higher education faculty and staff to use service-learning as a teaching strategy
 - (b) Expand the number of college students volunteering
 - (i) Increase the number of colleges and universities matching the AmeriCorps Education Award
 - (ii) Increase the number of colleges and universities providing scholarships tied to students being engaged in service throughout college
 - (iii) Help build the capacity of student-led volunteer programs and connect them to quality community volunteer opportunities
 - (iv) Expand the number of colleges/universities implementing a service requirement for graduation
 - (v) Increase the number of work-study students participating in service
 - (vi) Expand the number of colleges served by a volunteer referral system to increase volunteerism in individuals aged 18-26
 - (vii) Support expansion of Iowa Campus Compact participating colleges and universities
 - (viii) Increase the number of college students participating in National Service
 - 1. Provide outreach and marketing support to new and existing programs

- 2. Work with existing programs to provide outreach at college volunteer fairs, support campus-wide volunteer events, etc.
- (ix) Evaluate and support expansion of college referral systems, such as civic engagement programs, community based learning centers and volunteer centers
 - a. Promote regular meetings, training, and networking between colleges and community organizations focused on providing meaningful experiences for college students and meeting community needs
 - b. Assess potential of additional state, federal or community foundation funds to expand service areas
- (x) Collect data and promote the benefits of student engagement

iv) Disadvantaged Youth

- (1) Work to increase the number of disadvantaged youth participating in community-based and school-based service learning opportunities, to help them see that they can make a positive impact in their local communities
 - (a) Provide technical assistance and other support to local organizations focused on providing service opportunities to disadvantaged youth
 - (b) Provide training resources to organizations to develop volunteer opportunities for disadvantaged youth
 - (c) Partner or facilitate partnerships with organizations where disadvantaged youth are most likely to be engaged (i.e. faith based, neighborhood centers) to ensure the students have quality opportunities for service-learning.
- (2) Assist current and future national service programs to incorporate components that assist disadvantaged youth in programming, either as members, service recipients or volunteers
- (3) Provide technical assistance to organizations and partners to develop programs using successful models for reengaging disadvantaged youth. Help these new programs:
 - (a) Create a group environment in which young people feel safe, well-connected, and like they belong
 - (b) Set clear boundaries and expectations for behavior
 - (c) Increase responsibilities as youth have early successes
 - (d) Invite responsible adults to serve as mentors, role models, and guides
 - (e) As part of the RFP process, encourage applications from organizations that work with disadvantaged youth and work to develop youth as leaders in their local communities
 - (f) Empower disadvantaged youth by incorporating youth voices/leaders in programs and plans that address their needs
 - (g) Integrate young people together to provide opportunities for all young people to participate on an equal footing and build relationships across differences
- (4) Be intentional about diversity issues in messaging by emphasizing each person's capacity to serve, common goals, and human values

v) Iowans with Disabilities

- (1) Strengthen outreach programs for disability organizations, conferences, and councils, and help foster relationships that will lead to more volunteers with disabilities serving in Iowa
- (2) Promote the idea that service activities must be open, inclusive, and allow for impactful participation
- (3) Conduct outreach and promotion to Iowa's disability organizations to help better connect people with disabilities with service opportunities
- (4) Provide outreach and training to volunteer service programs to educate them on how they can tap into the disabled community for volunteers and promote a more inclusive environment

- (5) Work with current national service programs to include people with disabilities in national service
- (6) Provide point of contact for organizations seeking training and technical assistance on recruiting and providing accommodations to volunteers with disabilities
- (7) Facilitate a yearly service project which focuses on including people with disabilities in volunteering
- (8) Partner with a disability “mentoring” type of program to get people with visual impairments and other disabilities involved in their communities as volunteers
- (9) Work with veterans groups to engage disabled veterans
- (10) Improve the www.volunteeriowa.org website’s accessibility to individuals with disabilities, and help other organizations learn how to make their websites and other information readily accessible