

**Serve Colorado -
The Governor's Commission on Community Service**

Office of Lieutenant Governor Joseph A. Garcia



2013-2015

COLORADO

STATE SERVICE PLAN

Introduction

[Serve Colorado – The Governor’s Commission on Community Service](#), under the Office of Lieutenant Governor Joseph A. Garcia, presents the *2013-2015 Colorado State Service Plan* to the [Corporation for National and Community Service](#) (CNCS). This plan establishes [efficient, effective, and elegant](#) strategic goals that promote national service and volunteerism as sustainable solutions to Colorado’s growing and diverse needs.

Serve Colorado strives to build a culture of citizenship, service, and responsibility in Colorado. Furthermore, it promotes volunteerism and service as a means to strengthen Colorado communities through Days of Service, special initiatives, and community partnerships. It functions under the leadership of sixteen Commissioners, representing a variety of sectors, to distribute and administer Colorado’s allocation of [AmeriCorps*State](#) funding.

This service plan aligns with the CNCS [Strategic Plan 2011-2015](#), the [2009 Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act](#) (Serve America Act), initiatives of [Governor John. W. Hickenlooper](#) and [Lieutenant Governor Joseph A. Garcia](#), and the local priorities identified by the statewide needs assessment conducted during spring 2013.

The Serve America Act directs CNCS to expand opportunities to serve, build the capacity of individuals, nonprofits and communities, and encourage innovative approaches to addressing community challenges. The law puts a strong emphasis on focusing national service on a core set of priority issue areas, defined below, and measuring the impact of service. This directive is a guiding force for both CNCS’s and Serve Colorado’s strategic plans.

- [Disaster Services](#): Build the capacity of national service network organizations to help their states and localities prepare for, respond to, recover from and mitigate disasters and increase community resiliency
- [Economic Opportunity](#): Provide, support, and/or facilitate access to services and resources that contribute to the improved economic well-being and security of economically disadvantaged people
- [Education](#): Provide, support, and/or facilitate access to services and resources that contribute to improved educational outcomes for economically disadvantaged people, especially children
- [Environmental Stewardship](#): Provide direct services that contribute to increased energy and water efficiency, renewable energy use, or improving at-risk ecosystems; support increased citizen behavioral change leading to increased efficiency, renewable energy use, and ecosystem improvements, particularly for economically disadvantaged households and economically disadvantaged communities
- [Healthy Futures](#): Provide direct services that enable adults age 55 and over to remain in their own homes with the same or improved quality of life for as long as possible; increase physical activity and improve nutrition in youth with the purpose of reducing childhood obesity, and improve access to primary and preventive health care.

- [Veterans and Military Families](#): Demonstrate the potential for CNCS-supported national service interventions to 1) positively impact the quality of life of veterans and 2) improve military family strength

Using these objectives as a framework, Serve Colorado has identified three priorities for the next three years. This blueprint will guide funding decisions, program development activities, strategic, long-range strategies in Colorado, and compliment existing national service programs through the year 2015.

Colorado National Service Landscape

Each year more than 12,000 Coloradans of all ages and backgrounds participate in national service and volunteer opportunities in Colorado. Participants provide additional support to youth, veterans, disaster victims, and other economically disadvantaged populations in more than 1,200 locations throughout the state. During the 2012-2013 program year alone, CNCS invested more than \$30 million in Colorado through national service initiatives.

National service in Colorado is exemplified through an overwhelming participation in national service initiatives, and the dedication to state-wide days of service. As a result, Colorado is situated at the forefront of national service. The following identify the state's national service resources during the 2012-2013 program year. More information can be found by clicking each hyperlink.

- Serve Colorado administers fourteen [AmeriCorps*State](#) programs, with more than 650 members, addressing various community challenges. Programs directly impact early literacy and education, job skill development, homelessness, substance abuse prevention and treatment, and environmental sustainability.
- Colorado benefits from [AmeriCorps*National Direct](#) members who serve 339 regional locations of national organizations, including non-profits, municipalities, schools, colleges, and churches. Currently, Colorado has more than 4,000 AmeriCorps*National Direct members impacting communities through education, health, and leadership initiatives.
- Colorado further benefits from 112 [AmeriCorps* VISTA](#) members. AmeriCorps* VISTA members commit to serve on a specific project at a nonprofit organization or public agency to alleviate poverty and build capacity of host organizations, while improving literacy, health services, economic development, and serving low-income communities.
- Colorado hosts an [AmeriCorps*NCCC](#) regional campus in Denver with more than 350 members. AmeriCorps* NCCC members complete team-based national and community service project partnering with non-profits, local municipalities, state governments, and federal government.
- Colorado hosts 180 [FEMACorps](#) members who are devoted solely to FEMA disaster response and recovery efforts. Structured like AmeriCorps*NCCC. FEMACorps directly serves disaster survivors and supports disaster recovery centers, among other activities. The twenty FEMACorps crews have served communities affected by the wildfires throughout

Colorado, and have completed 41 projects nationwide in the first three months of programming.

- Colorado engages 6,910 [Senior Corps](#) members to help meet the needs and challenges of its communities. Senior Corps connects adults age 55 and over with opportunities to become mentors, companions to people experiencing need, and to contribute their professional expertise to community projects.
- The Colorado [Social Innovation Fund](#) partners with Mile High United Way to support eleven nonprofit organizations working to improve the lives of people in low-income communities. By contributing over \$1.3 million, the Social Innovation Fund leverages public and private resources to grow innovative solutions that impact economic opportunity, healthy futures and youth development.

Coloradans further demonstrate their commitment to volunteerism through statewide Days of Service. The following points identify Colorado's Days of Service. More information can be found by following the hyperlink to Serve Colorado's website.

- [Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service](#)
- César Chávez Month of Service
- [Colorado Cares Day](#)
- [September 11th National Day of Service and Remembrance](#)

Through volunteerism and national service, Coloradans find innovative solutions to their communities' most pressing challenges. By serving together, Coloradans have had significant impact in addressing the challenges facing education and literacy, health, economic opportunity, and environmental stewardship throughout the state, and will continue to do so as a result of future collaborative national service programming throughout the state.

Approach to Outreach

In Spring 2013, Serve Colorado conducted a statewide needs assessment through an online survey to gain the public input of stakeholder groups and citizens in each of Colorado's sixty-four diverse counties. Respondents from each county represented state, county, and local governments, non-profits, the private sector, educational institutions, health and wellness organizations, environmental stakeholder groups, and community members at-large. Serve Colorado partnered with current sub-grantees throughout the state, the Colorado CNCS state office, the AmeriCorps*NCCC Denver campus, county commissioners, natural disaster response agencies, and regional councils of governments, among others, to disseminate the survey and ensure diverse stakeholder groups were represented. The information learned from the assessment will be utilized to map out regional needs and priorities throughout the state, and support locally appropriate national service resources in those regions.

The survey assessed the capacity in which national service can, and will, meet the growing needs of each community in a viable, sustainable manner. Survey respondents identified **Education**, **Healthy Futures**, and **Economic Opportunity** as the most pressing needs throughout the state, although specificity within each focus area varies from region to region. However, it is important to

note that each focus area, as explained in the introduction of this plan, holds significance throughout Colorado and will not be absent from the national service landscape in the years to come.

In addition to the needs assessment administered by Serve Colorado, this plan was developed based on the success and results of [TBD Colorado](#), a nonpartisan, collaborative effort designed to create informed and constructive conversations among Coloradans about some of the biggest issues facing the state. TBD Colorado hosted community meetings across that state throughout spring and summer 2012. TBD Colorado has since hosted two public meetings and launched an innovative online engagement tool to receive ideas and input from Colorado residents. TBD Colorado, initiated by the Office of Governor John W. Hickenlooper, engages Coloradans in conversation around education, health, transportation, the state budget, and the state workforce, and promotes widespread public participation that includes geographic, cultural, professional and age-related interests in determining what Colorado will look like in the future.

Three in Three

Serve Colorado has identified the following three priorities to accomplish in the next three years. It will direct resources toward the completion of each priority and has identified corresponding potential strategies, listed below. This section discusses Serve Colorado's opportunities to build a culture of citizenship, service, and responsibility throughout the state while enhancing the efficiency, effectiveness, and elegance of its national service resource provision.

- 1. Strengthen cross-sector support to increase strategic partnerships and sustainability.** Serve Colorado will support programming that fosters collaboration with other AmeriCorps streams of service, non-profit organizations, governmental agencies, and the private sector to increase effectiveness and ensure financial and programmatic sustainability.

Potential Strategies

- Develop partnerships with other state commissions through collaborative opportunities, as exemplified by the Southwest National Service Cluster Conference hosted by Serve Colorado
- Expand the partnership with Serve Minnesota, other states, and Colorado communities to replicate the Minnesota Reading Corps
- Collaborate with organizations that have a regional and/or statewide presence, including, but not limited to, the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs and Colorado 4 – H with the Colorado State University Extension
- Facilitate public-private partnerships to diversify funding amongst sub-grantees through ongoing training and technical assistance
- Align national service programs in Colorado that coordinate AmeriCorps*NCCC's short term response efforts, AmeriCorps*VISTA's medium and long term capacity building capability, and AmeriCorps*State's medium and long term direct service provision, among others
- Create a map of existing national service programs within Colorado to increase awareness about statewide AmeriCorps presence and ensure impactful placement of national service resources.

2. Increase public awareness and engagement in national service and volunteerism.

Serve Colorado recognizes the importance of engaging Coloradans in service within their communities, demonstrating its impact throughout the state, and promoting a culture of civic engagement and volunteerism.

Potential Strategies

- Feature members and service sites in each of Serve Colorado's monthly newsletters to demonstrate the face of Coloradans engaged in national service
- Train programs to more effectively communicate and publicize their data-driven program impact
- Coordinate statewide Days of Service to demonstrate statewide impact and collaboration, as well as foster regional volunteer participation and critical reflection
- Utilize social media to increase awareness of service opportunities to all Coloradans, including but not limited to veterans and military families, adults age 55 and over, and people of all abilities

3. Expand the state portfolio to effectively impact regionally identified priorities. Serve Colorado will invest its national service resources in evidence-based solutions to locally-determined priorities.

Potential Strategies:

- Prioritize national service resources in Colorado's rural and under-represented communities to leverage federal resources and expand program impact, including Colorado's eastern plains region and American Indian populations
- Utilize the map of regional priorities, as developed by ongoing statewide need assessments, to demonstrate locally-identified priorities, compliment existing programs, and support program expansion
- Cultivate high quality and cost effective technical assistance to potential applicants that build capacity, expand knowledge of national service, and encourage evidence-based solutions to community needs
- Expand training to current sub-grantees to strengthen performance measurement and evaluation of impact
- Direct funding towards programs that evidence impact in addressing regionally identified community needs
- Communicate national service opportunities through the engagement of local networks and initiatives, including, but not limited to, Rural Philanthropy Days, Colorado United Way organizations, One Congregation – One Family, Colorado institutions of higher education, and local and regional government

Conclusion

With support of the Serve America Act, the CNCS *Strategic Plan 2011-2015*, and initiatives of Governor Hickenlooper and Lieutenant Governor Garcia, Serve Colorado will direct its strategic planning to achieve the priorities indicated in this plan. By diversifying its collaborative partnerships, developing a more geographically diverse portfolio that effectively impacts regionally-identified priorities, and increasing the awareness of and engagement in national service, Serve Colorado will demonstrate the ability of national service be a sustainable solution to Colorado's growing and diverse needs.