

Serve Colorado –
The Governor’s Commission on Community Service

Office of Lieutenant Governor Donna Lynne



2018-2020
COLORADO
STATE SERVICE PLAN

2018-2020 Colorado State Service Plan

[Serve Colorado](#) – The Governor’s Commission on Community Service, under the Office of Lieutenant Governor [Donna Lynne](#), presents the 2018-2020 Colorado State Service Plan to the [Corporation for National and Community Service](#) (CNCS).

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SERVE COLORADO
Governor’s Commission on Community Service

Introduction

Serve Colorado empowers community-based organizations to meet locally identified needs through national service and volunteerism. This mission is met in two ways: through serving as Colorado's grant making entity for AmeriCorps State programs and through facilitating National Days of Service.

Serve Colorado is guided by the leadership of sixteen Commissioners appointed by the Governor who use their skills and expertise to award and administer Colorado's AmeriCorps State funding.

State Service Plan Background

This State Service Plan serves as the roadmap in helping Colorado communities find sustainable solutions to their growing and diverse needs through national and community service.

A comprehensive statewide needs assessment informed the funding priorities and strategic goals set in this plan to guide the Commission in its work through 2020. Our State Service Plan is rooted in research on the most pressing needs faced by Colorado communities.

This service plan aligns with the current [CNCS Strategic Plan](#), the [2009 Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act](#), and the local priorities identified by the [statewide needs assessment conducted](#) in the fall of 2017. It builds off of the success of the 2016-2018 State Service Plan. A report of the results from our previous plan can be found on our [website](#).

The 2018-2020 Colorado State Service Plan will be revisited annually by our Commission to provide timely updates, evaluate progress on the strategic goals, and will be modified to address any emergent crises such as natural disasters or public health emergencies.

Serve Colorado's Work

AmeriCorps Colorado

As the State Service Commission for Colorado, Serve Colorado awards AmeriCorps State grants to organizations statewide seeking to use people power to address critical community needs. AmeriCorps State programs provide AmeriCorps members to nonprofits, public agencies, tribes, and faith-based organizations as boots-on-the-ground resources to tackle local challenges.

For the 2017-2018 program year Serve Colorado administers a total of 16 [AmeriCorps State](#) grants, with 14 programs harnessing 1181 members to address pressing community needs such as opioid abuse, early literacy, homelessness, and environmental stewardship. Serve Colorado also funds and guides two planning grants, which provide organizations the ability to explore and plan for how national service can be used as a catalyst for change in the communities they serve.

Serve Colorado's current portfolio of programs serve 46 counties across the state and the \$5.2 million in federal funding is supported by \$2.6 million in program matching funds. In the 2016-2018 State Service Plan, Serve Colorado set out to utilize 75% of Formula grant funding to support programs working to increase Colorado's high school graduation rate. The Commission achieved this goal; in the 2017-18 program year 84% of formula grant funding and 78% of total portfolio funding is committed to K-12 success. Serve Colorado's funding priorities and strategic goals for the next three years are detailed later in this plan.

Days of Service

Here in Colorado, giving back to our communities is simply a part of our culture. We pride ourselves on going the extra mile for our neighbor and leaving the state even better for generations to come. Through our Days of Service, Colorado comes together to honor the legacy of important people who inspire us to be greater. Our Days of Service, which include the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service, Cesar Chavez Day of Service, and 9/11 Day of Service and Remembrance, help make Colorado what it is: a community of people dedicated to improving the lives of others.

Days of Service enable Serve Colorado to make volunteerism accessible for all Coloradans and awakens citizens to the value of giving their time and talents to their community. Serve Colorado requires all of its AmeriCorps members to participate in the Days of Service and encourages members to bring another person, beyond their AmeriCorps member cohorts, to serve alongside them. For all three Days of Service, the Commission makes online resources available to connect Coloradans to opportunities to volunteer in their communities.

Colorado National Service Landscape

The [Corporation for National and Community Service \(CNCS\)](#) is the federal agency created to connect all Americans with an opportunity to serve their communities and their country in partnership with [State Service Commissions](#) like Serve Colorado.

AmeriCorps provides thousands of Americans of all ages and backgrounds with intensive full- and part-time opportunities to serve their communities and help community-based organizations meet local needs. AmeriCorps members dedicate up to a year of their lives to service for a small stipend and an educational scholarship upon successful completion of their service. There are three branches of AmeriCorps, explained in greater detail below.

Members serve on the front lines of education, environment, public safety, emergency management, and other critical human needs, harnessing the tremendous power of citizens as change agents in their communities. Since 1994, more than 33,000 Coloradans have served more than 31 million hours and have qualified for Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards totaling over \$76.6 million.

AmeriCorps serves as a talent pipeline for communities across Colorado. AmeriCorps programs recruit top talent from all over the country to serve in their programs. When members spend a year in service with a community, they often stay. Over their year of service, AmeriCorps members gain valuable professional development and personal growth, also making AmeriCorps service appealing for someone seeking a meaningful opportunity in their hometown.

While AmeriCorps NCCC members come from around the United States, a high percentage of their members remain in Colorado after their graduation, often working in careers with a social benefit or continuing their education in Colorado. A survey conducted by NCCC Southwest Region indicates that on average 30% of their graduating class remains in Colorado, with an additional 20% stating intent to return to Colorado within the coming year. And we don't just see this effect in the Denver Metro area - there are hundreds of examples statewide of AmeriCorps members becoming long-term assets to their community long after their service ends.

The following describes each national service resource at work in Colorado:

AmeriCorps State & National

Sometimes referred to as "The AmeriCorps Network" [AmeriCorps State & National](#) programs seek to address critical community needs in areas such as education, public safety, health, and the environment. Serve Colorado administers Colorado's AmeriCorps State grants, funding organizations to run evidence-based direct service programs addressing local priorities with CNCS grant funding.

CNCS directly funds AmeriCorps National Direct programs where high capacity organizations place AmeriCorps members at host sites nationwide to address community challenges.

Serve Colorado's 14 programs empower 1181 AmeriCorps State members to make lasting impacts in their communities in areas such as early literacy, homelessness, opioid abuse prevention, and environmental stewardship. Colorado benefits from more than 830 AmeriCorps National Direct members impacting communities through education, health, and leadership initiatives.¹

Funding for AmeriCorps State programming in Colorado comes from two sources: direct funding provided to the state to run its "Formula" grants process, and federal funding available in the "Competitive" national grant competition.

Formula funds are distributed to states through a population-based formula allocation. Serve Colorado is able to determine the funding priorities for the state in awarding these grant funds.

In addition to granting Formula funds allocated to Colorado, Serve Colorado also sends strong state grant applicants for Competitive federal funding. Successful Competitive applications then increase the resources and overall AmeriCorps presence in the state.

AmeriCorps VISTA

[AmeriCorps VISTA](#) (Volunteers in Service to America) members seek to eradicate poverty by building the capacity of our nation's nonprofits and public agencies. AmeriCorps VISTA members provide indirect service by creating or expanding programs designed to bring individuals and communities out of poverty. Each VISTA member makes a yearlong, full-time commitment to serve on a specific project at a nonprofit organization or public agency. About 8,000 VISTAs are placed each year in more than 1,100 projects in low-income communities around the country.

The CNCS Colorado State Office places 130 [AmeriCorps VISTA](#) members in projects statewide.¹ 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.

AmeriCorps NCCC

[AmeriCorps NCCC](#) (National Civilian Community Corps) is a full-time, team-based, residential program for young adults age 18-24 that strengthens communities and develops leaders through national service. Teams of 8-10 members complete multiple projects during their 10-month service term. As a residential program, NCCC provides members with housing, transportation, uniforms and meals.

¹Corporation for National and Community Service. [National Service in Colorado](#). February 2017.

The [AmeriCorps NCCC Southwest Regional Campus](#), based in Aurora, annually deploys more than 320 members throughout a nine-state region. Visit [NCCC Southwest Region's Facebook page](#) to learn more about their efforts.

Senior Corps

A sister program to AmeriCorps, [Senior Corps](#) connects Americans age 55 and over to service opportunities where their skills, knowledge, and experience can make a lasting impact in their community. The Foster Grandparents, Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), and Senior Companions programs empower over 245,000 seniors annually to serve their communities.

The CNCS Colorado State Office administers over 4,500 [Senior Corps](#) volunteers to serve Colorado in many capacities including as mentors, companions to people experiencing need, and in retrofitting housing to enable seniors to age with dignity in their own homes.

“Collaboration”

Colorado has a proud tradition of true collaboration between all streams of national service. While the state is uniquely positioned in its ability to collaborate due to the presence of all national service streams' regional offices within the Denver Metro area, this relationship has flourished as it has been intentionally cultivated and prioritized.

Through strategic planning, open communication, and joint outreach for program development Colorado is able to leverage the resources of the State Commission, State Office, and NCCC campus to best serve the people of Colorado.

In the past three years, Serve Colorado has strategically leveraged its federal AmeriCorps funds in collaboration with our service partners to target underserved geographic areas of the state, such as the San Luis Valley, and address our most pressing issues such as opioid abuse.

This commitment to collective impact is witnessed by the participation of all three agencies in annual strategic planning meetings, supporting other stream's program specific events, and in providing a warm hand-off from connections made during outreach trips.

Serve Colorado remains committed to ensuring that AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps VISTA, AmeriCorps NCCC, and Senior Corps are all seen as valued partners in building a better Colorado. Therefore, collaborative goals have been included within the [second strategic goal](#) outlined later in this plan.

Methodology

To inform this plan, Serve Colorado commissioned Vantage Evaluation to conduct an extensive statewide needs assessment in the fall of 2017. Serve Colorado elected to partner with professional evaluators on this project to increase the quality and depth of the research. Due to this increased capacity, the needs assessment utilized a blended methodology of key informant interviews, white paper document review, and a dynamic statewide survey.

Key Informant Interviews

Vantage Evaluation conducted seven key informant interviews with regional, tribal, and statewide stakeholders to better understand the unmet needs, underserved populations, and barriers to AmeriCorps programming in their regions. The findings from these interviews were used to inform survey development.

White Paper Document Review

Evaluators conducted a document review of the Community Resource Center's white papers created for the previous eight regional [Rural Philanthropy Days](#) conferences. The Rural Philanthropy Days regional conferences provide a unique opportunity for statewide funders to hear the voices of rural Colorado. Regional Listening Tours were conducted to assess local community needs and the key strategies sought to address them. The white papers analyzed by Vantage Evaluation are a synthesis of the information collected during the most recently conducted Regional Listening Tours for each region from 2013 through 2016. Vantage Evaluation used the results of the document review to inform the content of the statewide survey and later to check the survey results.

Needs Assessment Electronic Survey

With the assistance of Vantage Evaluation, Serve Colorado conducted a statewide electronic survey to gain a deeper understanding of the unmet needs, underserved populations, and barriers to AmeriCorps programming both regionally and across the state.² The survey was distributed via email and social media from October to November of 2017. In total, 542 Coloradans completed the survey with at least three respondents from each county in Colorado, surpassing all regional response targets.

Vantage Evaluation analyzed the data collected from this survey in conjunction with the key-informant interviews and white paper analysis. The funding priorities and strategic goals set in this plan are a direct response to these findings. A full report on the research conducted by Vantage Evaluation can be found on our [website](#) in addition to this plan.

²Vantage Evaluation. [Serve Colorado: State Service Plan Needs Assessment](#). January 2018.

Funding Priority Areas

Through the statewide needs assessment conducted in the fall of 2017, communities across Colorado identified how national service resources can best meet their needs. In alignment with the Corporation for National and Community Service, Serve Colorado now includes within its funding priorities the top community identified strategies for addressing the areas of greatest unmet need.

While many approaches to tackling these critical issues will be needed, **Serve Colorado will prioritize funding for applications that align with the top community-identified strategies. These funding priorities are all weighted equally and are not listed in any particular order.**

Serve Colorado will seek to prioritize the investment of national service resources in:

1. Economic Opportunity
 - a. Affordable housing
 - i. Individuals experiencing homelessness were identified as the most underserved population statewide. Therefore, services for people experiencing homelessness, or which will lead to the prevention of homelessness, will receive special priority
 - b. Infrastructure support such as transportation services and broadband access
 - c. Affordable child care
 - d. Workforce development resources and services, such as job training and job placement programs
2. Behavioral and Mental Health Care
 - a. Mental health treatment (inpatient or outpatient)
 - b. Substance abuse prevention, treatment, and recovery
 - c. Suicide prevention
 - d. The recruitment and retention of qualified healthcare professionals (including primary care, mental health, behavioral health, and specialty providers)
3. Education
 - a. The recruitment and/or retention of qualified teachers
 - b. Early childhood education
 - c. Out-of-school time (afterschool and summer) programming
 - d. Whole child support systems
4. Rural and Mountainous Community Development
 - a. Program models utilizing a rural intermediary approach
 - b. Innovative and/or evidence-based solutions to locally determined priorities in rural and mountainous communities

Serve Colorado's goal to address these community-identified priority areas will guide funding decisions, program development activities, long-range strategies for national service in Colorado, and compliment existing national service programs through the year 2020.

Serve Colorado has designed the fourth funding priority area on rural and mountainous community development as a result of the [research conducted on the barriers](#) communities face to accessing AmeriCorps programming. Serve Colorado is particularly interested in program models that seek to address the needs of rural/mountainous communities in Colorado utilizing a rural intermediary approach.

The Commission will work to expand Colorado's portfolio of AmeriCorps programs to address the community-identified priorities above. Serve Colorado honors the value and necessity of programs seeking to address all six of CNCS' focus areas and looks forward to maintaining partnerships with existing grantees as we continue to develop programming that addresses critical community needs. All applications for AmeriCorps programs will also be assessed with how they align to locally identified priority areas.

To be considered in alignment with a priority funding area, a program's core focus must be to address that need with national service. Applicants should note that it is not recommended to alter program design to try and align with a priority area. Serve Colorado is willing to fund programs in all of CNCS' focus areas.

Overcoming Barriers to Service

Every community in Colorado should have equitable access to the resource of AmeriCorps. As such, Vantage Evaluation was tasked with conducting research on the barriers faced by communities seeking to access AmeriCorps programming. Needs assessment survey respondents answered questions on the factors that have kept their organization from applying for an AmeriCorps State grant.

Serve Colorado will work in 2018-2020 to overcome the obstacles identified by Vantage Evaluation as outlined below. This data has been tremendously valuable for Serve Colorado as we work to ensure equitable access to the resource of AmeriCorps to the communities who need it most. We believe this information may be of use for other Commissions and national service colleagues similarly seeking to increase access to AmeriCorps programming.

Lack of Awareness of Serve Colorado and AmeriCorps

The vast majority of survey respondents were not aware of Serve Colorado's role as the funder for AmeriCorps State programs in Colorado. If Serve Colorado aims to serve more communities, it must ensure that communities are aware of the national service resources they have at their disposal.

As only approximately one third of respondents understood Serve Colorado's role, it is clear that additional efforts must be placed on raising awareness of AmeriCorps and Serve Colorado statewide. The Commission is implementing a multi-tiered plan to address this in [Strategic Goal #3](#).

Lack the Capacity to Support 10 Member Service Year (MSY) Minimum

Over half of survey respondents lack the capacity to support the minimum of the equivalent of 10 full time members required to host an AmeriCorps State program. Of those surveyed, two thirds of respondents indicated their support for a network model of programming, sometimes referred to as an intermediary or satellite program design.

To support the growth of these programs, Serve Colorado has designed the [fourth funding priority area](#) on rural and mountainous community development to promote the rural intermediary approach to programming as a means to address this barrier. Serve Colorado has committed to conducting strategic outreach to organizations with the potential to host a rural intermediary in [Strategic Goal #2](#).

Inability to Meet Match Funding Requirements

To build local support of the AmeriCorps program and ensure long-term program sustainability, AmeriCorps State programs are required to match federal dollars in incremental increases. Over one third of survey respondents reported lacking the capacity to meet the matching requirements of the grant.

Serve Colorado has identified the rural intermediary approach to programming, which enables smaller organizations to pool resources, as a best practice in overcoming this obstacle and is reflected in the creation of the [fourth funding priority area](#). Serve Colorado is also committed to providing better educational tools and guidance to applicants on how they might finance an AmeriCorps program as outlined in [Strategic Goal #2](#).

Cost of Living is Too High to Support Members

Over one quarter of respondents identified the cost of living in their communities as too high to support members on a living allowance as a factor that kept them from applying for AmeriCorps State funds. This data echoes anecdotal information Serve Colorado has heard from the field, with particular concern for members' ability to secure affordable and safe housing.

In 2018, Serve Colorado will call for an ad-hoc Committee within its Commission on safe and affordable housing for members. The Committee will research national best practices on supporting members and consolidate their findings.

Serve Colorado will continue to explore ways to connect members with resources to support their cost of living, such as our continued partnership with CDHS to connect members to food assistance resources, and pursue similar partnerships with other state agencies.

Serve Colorado will conduct exploratory research with members and programs on the biggest barriers to retention due to cost of living and the strategies enacted to overcome them. Probing questions on this topic will be added member interviews during site visits. In addition, reflection and data gathering activities will be built on this topic for the 2018 Member Retreat and any existing data on this topic will be collected from program staff. Serve Colorado will consolidate the findings of this research into educational resources for members and programs on the key strategies that have enabled others to maintain a high quality of life with limited resources during their AmeriCorps service. Serve Colorado has committed to enacting these strategies in [Strategic Goal #4](#).

Lack of Capacity to Manage a Federal Grant

AmeriCorps funding is subject to all of the rules and regulations associated with federal grant making. Many nonprofits currently lack the capacity to properly manage a federal grant, but that does not mean that with time and training they could not build the structures necessary to do so.

To build capacity, Serve Colorado will promote the rural intermediary approach to programming identified in the [fourth funding priority area](#), as it enables one or several organizations with the capacity to act as a gateway to service for others. This model enables smaller nonprofits to connect together in networks, which often increases the capacity of all those involved.

Additionally, Serve Colorado knows from experience that committing sufficient staff time is critical to the success of an AmeriCorps State program. Programs that commit insufficient staff time, such as having several staff members part time on the grant, have resulted in high rates of staff burnout, non-compliance, and general program instability. Serve Colorado will now require applicants to allocate a minimum of one full-time employee to the management of the grant. This position can be covered by federal funds, and Serve Colorado will work with applicants to build sustainable program budgets. As programs scale to host additional AmeriCorps members, Serve Colorado will assess that adequate staff capacity remains a program priority.

Serve Colorado is confident that these commitments, along with those outlined in our strategic goals, will ensure that national service is accessible in Colorado to any community that needs it.

Serve Colorado's Strategic Goals

To focus the efforts of Serve Colorado into measurable and meaningful outcomes for communities across the state, the following four strategic goals have been identified to guide the Commission in its work through 2020.

Each of the ambitious goals outlined below are equipped with practical strategies that Serve Colorado will pursue to achieve the measures set for each goal. Serve Colorado's Commission will monitor progress made on this plan to ensure measures are achieved by 2020.

STRATEGIC GOAL #1

OBJECTIVE: Earn more dollars for Colorado communities.

By increasing the quality of the existing portfolio of grantees, Serve Colorado will graduate more programs to be funded at the federal level, freeing up funding at the state level to incubate new solutions to pressing challenges.

STRATEGIES:

- Serve Colorado will adjust its grant competition process to facilitate increased flexibility for sending high quality applicants to CNCS for Competitive funding, with the intent of freeing-up additional dollars in the state-run Formula funding competition
- Provide individualized training and technical assistance to programs and new applicants to increase the quality of the grant applications submitted for Competitive funding
 - Provide one-on-one Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) for sub-grantees to help them advance on CNCS' evidence spectrum
- Increase the quality of data collected and reported to CNCS through additional data quality trainings, tools/resources, and continued sub-grantee monitoring on effective data collection practices
- Provide training and resources for programs on succession planning to prevent issues associated with staff transitions
 - Require sub-grantees to create and maintain written records of knowledge through policies, procedures, and manuals at all levels of program operation
 - Encourage sub-grantees to develop transition handbooks and toolkits to assist in on-boarding new program staff
- Better connect AmeriCorps programs for peer support and exchange
 - Establish a mentoring program where new and seasoned staff from different programs are paired for monthly calls and peer support
 - Create opportunities for targeted peer exchange at annual program staff trainings through strategic cohorts

- Use the monthly programmatic and fiscal conference calls to facilitate peer-to-peer sharing of best practices on various topics
- Ensure a digital forum exists for program staff to ask questions directly to their peers
- Provide individualized Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) to programs
 - Continue to facilitate one-on-one training and T/TA calls between Program Officers and program staff on a weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly basis depending on program development
 - Offer one-on-one T/TA from Program Officers on program specified topics during monitoring visits
 - Empower programs to request individualized T/TA from Serve Colorado on any topic at any time, which will be scheduled and structured on a case-by-case basis
- Build a more dynamic resource library for programs with in-depth, relevant, and effective training materials
 - Create a more easily navigated resource library to be hosted in Google Drive, or another online platform
 - Record training webinars to assist new programs and staff in getting up to speed quickly on AmeriCorps requirements and best practices in program start-up
 - Annually update the Program Director Handbook to ensure quality and relevance

MEASURES:

- Have 20% more programs directly federally funded ([Competitively funded](#)) by 2020
- Submit at least three current [Formula](#) grantees for Competitive funding by 2020
- Surpass \$6 million of funding from CNCS for AmeriCorps State by 2020
- Complete the supplemental Financial Handbook by September 2018
- Have grant staff mentorship program established by 2019

STRATEGIC GOAL #2

OBJECTIVE: Address Colorado's most pressing needs with national service.

Strategically utilize the [funding priorities as identified in](#) this plan to guide grant funding decisions to ensure that national service resources address priority community needs.

STRATEGIES:

- Build rural community capacity for programming by focusing on community assets and provide flexibility and coaching in meeting grant requirements, such as alternative match schedules and cost per MSY increases
- Prioritize grant funding for programs that seek to address one or more of the areas of greatest unmet need as identified by the State Service Plan
- Prioritize the use of intermediary models of program design to overcome the identified [barriers to service](#), as evidenced by the creation of the [fourth funding priority area](#).

- Conduct strategic outreach to organizations with the potential to host an AmeriCorps programs addressing one or more of our funding priorities
 - Place a particular emphasis on outreach in rural and mountainous communities
 - Utilize multiple avenues of communication e.g. in-person visits, phone calls, emails, presenting at conferences and other community events for outreach efforts
- Conduct research on the impact of AmeriCorps as a talent pipeline for rural communities
- Strategically utilize planning grant opportunities to develop viable program models in priority funding areas
- The AmeriCorps NCCC Southwest Region campus will strategically invest its national service resources in Colorado to address the [funding priorities](#) of economic opportunity and education.
- The CNCS State Office in Colorado will build partnerships with organizations and agencies that are addressing the opioid epidemic in Colorado, one of the pressing community needs identified as a Behavioral and Mental Health Care funding priority.

MEASURES:

- Fund three more intermediary models by 2020
- Have 50% of all new formula programs address one or more of the four funding priorities
- Have two planning grants result in funded AmeriCorps grant applications by 2020
- Receive five applications for funding from new organizations by 2020
- Have four currently unreached counties served by AmeriCorps State programming by 2020
- The AmeriCorps NCCC Southwest Region campus will allocate 40% of its Colorado project portfolio to address economic opportunity projects per year through 2020
- The AmeriCorps NCCC Southwest Region campus will allocate 20% of its Colorado project portfolio to address educational projects per year through 2020
- The CNCS State Office in Colorado will develop two additional VISTA projects focused on addressing the opioid epidemic by 2020

STRATEGIC GOAL #3

OBJECTIVE: Make AmeriCorps a household name.

Increase the awareness and reputation of national service in communities across Colorado, including among the general public, non-profit sector, private sector, business, and community leaders.

STRATEGIES:

- Create public service announcements to be run on Colorado television with the intent to increase the awareness and value of national service
- Maintain membership with organizations such as America's Service Commissions and Service Year Alliance who work to nationally raise the profile of AmeriCorps

- Conduct outreach with strategic partners to increase awareness and support of AmeriCorps programming
 - Meet with members of the Governor’s cabinet to discuss the value of national service and how national service can help address the most pressing needs of Coloradans
 - Prepare and empower Commissioners to meet with other leaders in their respective fields to increase awareness of the impact of AmeriCorps
- Better engage elected officials to develop champions of national service
 - Create and present an annual report to the Governor’s Office and other community leaders on the impact of AmeriCorps service in Colorado
 - Send letters of funding to local elected officials to raise the profile of AmeriCorps programming in their community
 - Conduct additional research on the economic argument for investing in national service
- Increase Serve Colorado’s social media following and maintain the quality of content on our Facebook and Twitter pages
- Conduct exploratory research on expanding Serve Colorado’s digital presence through platforms such as Instagram or LinkedIn
- Participate in the Community Resource Center’s Rural Philanthropy Days, other relevant conferences in the sector, to further expand the knowledge of what national service can offer rural serving organizations
- Seize the opportunities provided by national AmeriCorps initiatives such as the Mayor, County, and National Service Recognition Day, the annual Swearing-In Ceremony, and AmeriCorps Week to increase public awareness of the impact of national service
- Broaden the Governor’s Service Awards to engage the larger service community
- Provide trainings for our programs on best practices in sharing their impact with their networks

MEASURES:

- Increase the number of followers on Facebook and Twitter by 25% from 2018 - 2020
- By 2020, have met three times with five members of the Colorado Congressional Delegation, the Colorado General Assembly, and local elected officials in at least five counties
- By 2020, have met with four members of the Governor’s cabinet to discuss the value of national service in addressing the most pressing needs of Coloradans
- By 2019, produce three public service announcements that raise the profile of national service in Colorado highlighting generations of leadership and the power of service aired on statewide television
- Participate in 100% of Rural Philanthropy Days from 2018-2020
- Annually present reports to the Governor’s Office on the impact of AmeriCorps programming statewide

STRATEGIC GOAL #4

OBJECTIVE: Become the statewide catalyst for volunteerism.

Expand the opportunity for all Coloradans to serve by connecting those looking to volunteer, with service projects seeking volunteers.

STRATEGIES:

- Collaborate with existing organizations and projects which connect Coloradans looking to volunteer with opportunities to do so
 - Build collaborative relationships with volunteer management organizations
 - Gain a deeper understanding on volunteerism in Colorado outside of national service
 - Host an online database to connect citizens with opportunities to volunteer on our website, or link from our website to other such resources
- Establish annual aggregate volunteer engagement targets for our AmeriCorps programs and report on them annually to the Commission
- Explore conducting research on the economic impact of volunteerism in Colorado
- Define Serve Colorado's role in a disaster, build systems for efficient deployment of AmeriCorps members, and find ways to work to prepare for and prevent harm from disasters
- Create an ad-hoc Committee within the Commission on safe and affordable housing for AmeriCorps members
- Explore partnerships with businesses, organizations, and other state agencies to connect members with resources to support their cost of living
- Conduct exploratory research with members and programs on the biggest barriers to retention due to cost of living and the strategies enacted to overcome them.
 - Interview members on barriers to retention due to the cost of living by 2019
 - Conduct a data gathering activity during the 2018 Member Retreat
 - Collect existing data on innovative practices from programs in 2018 and 2019

MEASURES:

- Include aggregate volunteer engagement data within the three annual reports sent to the Governor's Office
- Build out website capability to connect volunteers and community organizations by 2020
- Include a member of the volunteerism community on our Commission by 2019
- Present findings of research on member cost of living strategies in an educational resources for members and programs by 2019
- Form ad-hoc Committee within the Commission on safe and affordable housing for AmeriCorps members by 2019.

Supplemental State Service Plan for Coloradans Age 55 and Older

As a key component of our State Service Plan, Serve Colorado has created this targeted plan to include our commitments to effectively include Coloradans aged 55 and over in national service and volunteerism.

We envision a Colorado that empowers the 55 and over community to live and age well. This idea can mean different things to different people within our communities. We believe that Serve Colorado can best help in reaching this vision by providing our 55 and over population with the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution through national service .

Engaging Coloradans aged 55 and over in service is not just a priority to Serve Colorado, but also a priority of the General Assembly and the Governor’s Office. In 2015, the Governor’s Office and the General Assembly created the Strategic Action Planning Group on Aging through House Bill 15-1033. The group was charged with examining the impact of the shifting aging demographic on the economy, workforce, businesses, market based products and services; state and local revenue budgets and fiscal policies; Medicaid and other safety-net programs and the collateral impact on other non-related state programs, etc.

In late 2016, the planning group published a report entitled, “Initial Strategic Action Plan on Aging for Colorado.” The report provided some context for the 55 and over demographic in Colorado: “The number of Coloradans aged 65 and over is projected to rise by more than 508,000 – an increase of 68 percent – by 2030.”³

The report detailed eight goals to help state leadership begin understanding and addressing the issues affecting the 55 and over population. Serve Colorado is uniquely situated to help the State of Colorado advance on Goal 2: *Older adults will be able to stay engaged in the labor force and volunteer sector for as long as they want or need.* This goal included the following sub-goals:

- Older adults will be able to meaningfully contribute to their communities as volunteers and build the capacity of nonprofits and public institutions.
- Provide education and training to ensure the readiness of older volunteers.
- Increase volunteer opportunities for older adults.
- Improve institutional readiness and willingness to leverage the skills and abilities of older volunteers.
- Improve the perception of older adults as valued and valuable volunteers.

From 2018-2020, Serve Colorado will be reaching out to the newly-created Senior Advisor on Aging within the Governor’s Office to discuss how best to engage with the Strategic Planning Group on Aging’s goals and recommendations throughout the 2018-2020 State Service Plan.

³ Strategic Action Planning Group on Aging. [Initial Strategic Plan on Aging for Colorado](#). November, 2016.

Serve Colorado, in collaboration with other State Service Commissions across the country, have developed a set recommendations for increasing volunteerism and national service opportunities for adults aged 55 and over. These recommendations are below:

- A. Utilize targeted messaging and train existing AmeriCorps programs on how best to recruit and utilize Coloradans age 55+ in service.
- B. Partner with organizations currently serving Coloradans 55+, as well as those that currently recruit and engage Coloradans 55+ as volunteers, to recruit and develop additional opportunities to serve.
- C. As Encore programming (programs which engage a significant number of participants age 55 or older) is a national funding priority from the Corporation National Community Service, Serve Colorado will work to develop and strengthen new and existing Encore programs in Colorado high enough in quality to be funded at the national level.
- D. Encourage the Colorado State Unit on Aging take specific action to better engage 55+ Coloradans in national service and volunteerism.
- E. Create service-learning projects that partner adults 55 and over with younger AmeriCorps members to address community problems.

With the guidance of this 55+ plan, we look forward to forging a future where the talents and knowledge of Colorado's seniors are harnessed to make a lasting impact in their communities.

Conclusion

Through accomplishing the goals set out in this plan, Serve Colorado seeks to utilize our strongest resource - our citizens - in solving the diverse and evolving challenges our communities face.

Under the guidance of this State Service Plan, Serve Colorado is poised to launch national service in Colorado to new heights. Our three-year plan focuses the work of the Commission as we seek to meet the needs of our state through service and volunteerism.

Serve Colorado understands the critical value of national service in shaping the future of Colorado, and we look forward to engaging with more partners in service.

Serve Colorado would like to express our gratitude to those who made this State Service Plan possible. This was a community project and it took a community to build it.

We thank our dynamic Commissioners for their support of this endeavor, and the Commission's State Service Plan Committee for their invaluable insights and leadership.

This plan is built upon the solid foundation of evidence thanks to our partner, Vantage Evaluation.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the Community Resource Center for ensuring the voice of rural Colorado was heard in the shaping of this plan.

We thank the community leaders interviewed and the 500+ Coloradans who responded to our survey for providing such rich insight to the challenges their communities are facing.

To the 33,000 Coloradans who have answered the call to serve their community as AmeriCorps members, thank you for your service. The impact made by our members is only possible because of our partnership with the Corporation for National and Community Service.

And our deepest gratitude to the people of Colorado - it is our honor to serve you.