

Serve Colorado
State Service Plan
2022–2025



COLORADO
Lt. Gov. Dianne Primavera



Two Tutoring Corps members stand in a school classroom.

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COLORADO

Governor Jared Polis

Serve Colorado, the Governor's Commission on Community Service, continues to utilize national service and volunteerism to address our state's greatest challenges. From protecting our state's precious natural resources to supporting students, AmeriCorps programs in Colorado strengthen communities. We're excited about the opportunity to continue to innovate with national service to create more solutions to some of our biggest challenges.

This plan lays out a framework to engage communities in their priority initiatives, create more pathways to high demand careers, and include more Coloradans in service.

We recognize this work requires strong community partnerships. We are grateful for the multi-sector collaboration that supports communities in every part of the state. With this plan, we are excited to create more connections to address local, Tribal, and state priorities.

Working together, Serve Colorado's programs are exploring new benefits for individuals serving and focusing on creating further impact in communities. AmeriCorps members are gaining experience and learning new skills, often launching careers in much needed fields.

As you review this plan, please consider how you can join us and Serve Colorado in making our state a place where everyone can thrive. To accomplish these goals, we need innovative programs, community partners, and more Coloradans to dedicate their time to national service.

Sincerely,

Jared Polis
Governor of Colorado

Dianne Primavera
Lieutenant Governor of Colorado

Who We Are and What We Do

Serve Colorado empowers community-based organizations to meet locally identified needs and statewide challenges through service and volunteerism. Working across all 64 counties, the team engages individuals to determine priorities and connect Coloradans through service and volunteerism. Serve Colorado is housed in the Office of the Lt. Governor and advised by the Governor’s Commission on Community Service, which is a group of bi-partisan, multi-sector leaders from across the state.

Core to its work, Serve Colorado awards AmeriCorps State grants to organizations across Colorado to address critical community needs with people power. AmeriCorps is a national service program that gives thousands of Americans the opportunity to support their local communities. Since 1994, more than 38,000 Colorado residents have served approximately 39 million hours and have earned education awards totaling over \$100,000,000.

During the past three years, Serve Colorado underwent a period of growth to address emerging needs of Colorado. By focusing on new and innovative partnerships, Serve Colorado was able to incrementally increase funding from State partners for organizations to operate programs. This included a funding increase of over \$12M from 2020 to 2021, creating more opportunities for individuals to make positive change. Additionally, Serve Colorado has succeeded with integrating workforce development into national service to prepare members for their future endeavors, including to support critical workforce needs in key sectors. This State Service Plan will guide Serve Colorado in building on these successes in the coming years.

Serve Colorado awakens people to the value of giving their time and talents to their community. Through the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service, Cesar Chavez Day of Service, and 9/11 Day of Service and Remembrance, Coloradans come together as a community of people dedicated to improving the lives of others.

The following pages present **Guiding Pillars**, which are the thematic priorities, and **Strategic Goals**, which are complex actions to complete during the next three years. Serve Colorado will create and publicly share annual **Objectives** to achieve the strategic goals and track progress through **Key Results**.



AmeriCorps members serve in a variety of settings.

AmeriCorps in Colorado – a true CO llaboration

Within Colorado, AmeriCorps programs offer opportunities with different time commitments and requirements, meaning people can serve in whatever capacity works for their passion, goals, and lifestyle. Denver is the only metropolitan area in the country with offices for all branches of AmeriCorps. Programs connect individuals with nonprofits, public agencies, Tribes, and faith-based organizations with multiple ways to serve.

- AmeriCorps NCCC provides direct service through team-based, short-term projects.
- AmeriCorps State and National provides direct service and capacity building through long-term programs. AmeriCorps State is administered by Serve Colorado.
- AmeriCorps VISTA increases organizational capacity to lift communities out of poverty.
- AmeriCorps Seniors has three programs for people 55+ : Foster Grandparents, RSVP, and Senior Companions.

AmeriCorps programs in Colorado are committed to working together for greater impact. This intentional collaboration occurs through annual strategic planning, open communication, support of each other’s events, and joint outreach for program development.

Working Together in Colorado

All streams of national service in Colorado came together in spring 2020 to form the COVID-19 Containment Response Corps. AmeriCorps members with this innovative and award-winning program performed remote case investigation, contact tracing, resource coordination, test-result notification, and isolation and quarantine monitoring. The success of this approach showed the value of working together and has led to further joint initiatives.



AmeriCorps members helped coordinate a children’s version of the Valley Bottom Rio Trio Triathlon in Alamosa.

Guiding Pillars

The guiding pillars focus the overall strategy to address current and emerging challenges, create opportunities, and support a Colorado for all. These thematic priorities will direct Serve Colorado's goals and actions during the next three years.

LEAD WITH EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Serve Colorado will center equity as an essential consideration with all actions and initiatives. Through inclusive practices and consistent community engagement across the state, Serve Colorado will support programming which aims to dismantle barriers to equity.

ENGAGE PARTNER NETWORK

Serve Colorado will develop a diverse network of multi-sector partners to fulfill the needs of communities, grantees, and AmeriCorps members.

DEVELOP THE FUTURE WORKFORCE

Serve Colorado values the skills which AmeriCorps members bring to their programs and communities. A commitment to ongoing development will enhance community impact and support diverse career pathways to address key workforce needs in vital sectors.

TELL OUR STORY

Serve Colorado commits to culturally competent and accessible communication about its work. Serve Colorado's purposeful outreach will focus on co-building partnerships and projects throughout the state, creating more opportunities to participate in its programming.

Strategic Goals

The following strategic goals describe what Serve Colorado will achieve during the next three years. Each goal includes a series of actions and connects with multiple guiding pillars. Just as the thematic priorities are interconnected, so too are these strategic goals. Together, these strategic goals can support holistic community resilience.

- 1 Expand strategic, multi-year relationships with government, non-profit and for-profit entities
- 2 Establish community-centered evaluation for both existing programs and grant application review
- 3 Cultivate an inclusive environment that encourages participation in AmeriCorps or volunteerism
- 4 Integrate workforce development training and activities into AmeriCorps programs to prepare members for service and future success
- 5 Ensure Serve Colorado staff and AmeriCorps members reflect the diversity of the communities they seek to support
- 6 Empower community-based nonprofit organizations to participate in national service programs, particularly those led by individuals who reflect the population they serve
- 7 Focus strategic communication and outreach to create innovative opportunities for diverse partners, individuals, and communities throughout Colorado

Sustainability, Adaptability, & Resilience

These guiding pillars and strategic goals will focus Serve Colorado’s decisions and energy; however, this is also a living document to address Colorado’s evolving needs. In that spirit, Serve Colorado has launched a series of community events to facilitate conversations about how AmeriCorps and Serve Colorado might better support organizations, local governments, and Tribal and American Indian/Alaska Native communities. Each year, Serve Colorado will formally review this State Service Plan, revising it to address emerging needs and priorities. These reviews will include the Governor’s Commission on Community Service and community members who wish to provide feedback. In a commitment to transparency and accountability, Serve Colorado will post on its website the State Service Plan, 2021 Needs Assessment, and all other supporting materials. This will include a dashboard to share progress and additional work needed to support Coloradans through national service.



An AmeriCorps member walks down the hallway with a student after a tutoring session.

State Service Plan Development

Every three years, Serve Colorado creates a State Service Plan – a strategy to guide the organization’s work – to help Colorado communities find sustainable solutions to their needs through national and community service. It is a living document that enables Serve Colorado to be responsive to the needs of the community through an annual review and goal-setting process. The approach to this plan was multi-stepped. The strategic planning process was led by a committee of the Governor’s Commission on Community Service and informed by past learnings including:

- [The 2021 Serve Colorado Needs Assessment](#)
- [The Governor’s Bold Four Priorities](#)
- [The 2022-2026 AmeriCorps Strategic Plan](#)
- [The 2009 Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act](#)



A small crew of AmeriCorps members stands in a forest with the tools they use to mitigate the risk of future disasters by removing forest fuel.

The approach to creating the Plan started with assessing unmet needs across the state. Each step was designed to understand Colorado’s needs and opportunities for national service. Throughout the process, the development team defined areas of intended impact, designed a methodology to collect qualitative and quantitative data, synthesized themes, and considered all findings through strategic discussion.

The process started with the development of a Needs Assessment – a report identifying Colorado-specific unmet needs, priority communities, and barriers to accessing AmeriCorps programming. Serve Colorado enlisted the help of Vantage Evaluation, a Denver-based professional evaluation firm. The Needs Assessment results are a vital piece of the final strategic planning steps, and it involved a blended methodology to gather and assess information:

DISCUSSION SESSIONS WITH ADVISORY GROUP –

Serve Colorado created an Advisory Group composed of a range of leaders from the community, including leaders representing traditionally underserved groups.

THE ONLINE SURVEY –

A statewide survey to understand the unmet needs more deeply was the primary source of information for the Needs Assessment.

KEY INTERVIEWS –

Priority community interviews were designed to supplement the statewide survey and deepen the understanding of the needs of specific priority communities and how Serve Colorado can best address those needs.

DATA ANALYSIS AND REPORTING –

Vantage Evaluation then conducted an in-depth analysis of survey responses and key information interviews, which included a comparison of answers between Priority community and non-Priority community individuals and an assessment of intersectionality.



An AmeriCorps member prepares food for guests at a community kitchen.

Finally, Serve Colorado leveraged the information of the Needs Assessment to develop the State Service Plan. This process consisted of three months of discussion and design with the help of Prosono, a professional service strategy consulting firm, and an ad hoc subcommittee of Commissioners and staff.

During the development of the Plan, Serve Colorado recognized the importance of sustainability, adaptability, and resilience. The lessons over the past three years have highlighted the need for this plan to be adaptive to community needs. Serve Colorado recognizes that these goals will take time to achieve, and it will ensure sustainable and innovative paths to programming.



Youth enjoy a hike organized by an AmeriCorps member who strives to empower girls to be confident pursuing outdoor hobbies that will benefit their physical, emotional, and mental health their whole lives.

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