Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service
(Volunteer Iowa)

State Service Plan 2016-2019
A Blue Print for Building on Iowa’s Ethic of Service

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

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

The Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service will use our resources and partnerships to fulfill strategies outlined in this plan. The plan includes: 1) Developing New Service Opportunities; 2) Improving Existing Services & Programs; 3) Building a Culture & Climate for Service; 4) Expanding Iowa’s Volunteer Base; and, 5) Building Iowa’s Volunteer Infrastructure.
**Logic Model**
The logic model below summarizes the approach that we at the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service take to our work, and the outcomes we hope to achieve in the state. The inputs and activities listed below are more fully explained in the priorities, objectives, strategies, and tactics outlined throughout the rest of the plan.

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### Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service Theory of Change

**Need:** In Iowa, there is a compelling need for more civic participation to solve community and state problems and address many unmet social, environmental, educational and public safety needs. Service directly improves ecological, human, and economic capital. And service, no matter its end result, inherently builds social capital, the connections between and among networks in a community, through the relationships people develop while serving. A healthy community is one that has high levels of social, ecological, human and economic capital, the combination of which may be thought of as community capital. Service benefits all aspects of community capital, making Iowa a better place.

**Goal:** An Iowa where all citizens are empowered through service to meet community challenges and make lives better.

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<td>Online volunteer matching portal</td>
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| Short-Term Knowledge/Attitude                                         | Medium-Term Behavior                                                  | Long-Term Condition                                                       |
|                                                                      |                                                                      |                                                                           |
| # individuals trained                                                | # volunteers recognized                                               | Increase civic engagement                                                |
| # organizations trained                                              | # of certified Service Enterprise organizations                       | Increase nonprofit, government and educational institution capacity for engaging volunteers effectively |
| # individuals volunteering                                           |                                                                      | Increase volunteerism and service                                        |
| Average # of hours volunteered                                       |                                                                      | Increase program quality                                                 |
| # AmeriCorps members serving                                         | # Days of Service projects                                            | Iowa has a culture and climate for service                               |
| # compliance issues identified during site visits                    |                                                                      |                                                                           |
| # volunteers recognized                                               |                                                                      | Iowans see volunteering as a cultural norm                                |

**Assumptions**
- Volunteering and service strengthen communities, regardless of the volunteer activity performed
- The nature of the volunteer activity will determine if the service also impacts other state and community needs
- Distance education and social media change human behavior
- Funding for programs can be secured with quality programming
- Research/evidence-based information produces expected outcomes
- National and Statewide/State-level attention to issues helps promote behavior change
- Every person can serve
- Individuals are interested in enhancing their lives
- Efficacy of service in meeting needs drives participation

**External Factors**
- The Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service cannot control most change factors (i.e. the economy, demographics, peer influences, natural disasters, political leadership, etc.)
- Competition for volunteers’ time and attention
- Competition for educational niche and funding
- Changing social media and distance education platforms
- Iowa is philanthropically underserved
- Priorities identified by the Iowa Legislature and/or Governor

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*Asterisks indicate strategies or tactics for policy development*
How we carry out our mission
The Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service (ICVS or Volunteer Iowa) and our partner agencies work with organizations and individuals on three main fronts. The first is to help agencies **develop** quality programs that use service as a strategy to fulfill their missions and address Iowa’s greatest areas of need. The second is to help **engage** Iowans in their communities by promoting a culture of service and expanding the volunteer base. Finally, the third area of work is to **connect** individuals with appropriate service opportunities by building the volunteer infrastructure.

Rationale for the vision statement
The ICVS embraces service and volunteering as resources that build community. Whether service contributes to the area’s people, natural environment, culture, physical infrastructure, financial status, or political systems, increasing the quantity and improving the quality of service provided makes communities better. In this way, service directly improves **ecological**, **human**, and **economic capital**. And service, no matter its end result, inherently builds **social capital**, the connections between and among networks in a community, through the relationships people develop while volunteering. A healthy community is one that has high levels of social, ecological, human and economic capital, the combination of which may be thought of as **community capital**. Service benefits all aspects of community capital, making Iowa a better place.

How the State Service Plan is used to direct the work of Volunteer Iowa
Iowa’s State Service Plan serves as a blueprint for maximizing civic engagement and service in Iowa. Like a blueprint for a dream house, this plan outlines what we want for service in Iowa and needs to be done, over time, to get there. We may not implement all components of the plan during the next three years, as the speed of our progress is conditional on external forces and Volunteer Iowa is only directly responsible for some of the work. However, we will prioritize and act on elements that are most achievable and ask our partners to do the same.

The State Service Plan will evolve over time as we aim to benefit the areas of Iowa that have not only a demonstrable need but also a strong chance for success. In our efforts, the ICVS will seek to support comprehensive community strategies in areas where stakeholders have already come together to address an issue, such as by using the principles of collective impact or other place-based strategies. We hope that this approach and the plan, in general, will be used by our partners in the service community as together we work to make Iowa a better place to live and the most civically engaged state in the nation. Each section of the plan contains priorities or objectives, which describe what the ICVS hopes will be accomplished, as well as strategies and tactics, which offer methods for realizing our priorities and objectives.
**Service Development: Demand for Volunteers**

**I.) Developing New Service Opportunities – 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 missions by engaging Iowans in addressing pressing community challenges. We do this by connecting those agencies in need with programming that we or our partners fund, or by providing technical assistance on how to better utilize community volunteers to fulfill that need. The introduction of new programming at the state and federal levels, along with the flexibility to utilize other funding streams to support service programs, combine to make new program development a vital piece of Iowa’s State Service Plan.

We know that engaging in any type of volunteering 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 their community. But we also know that when volunteers perceive their service is helping to make a difference towards real problems, they are also more likely to be highly engaged in their communities. So, as we work to support new program development, we are guided by the mission of the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service, directing us to use service to “improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement.” The bigger the need, and the more directly a volunteer experience is addressing the need, the more likely people will be willing to help. Accordingly, we want to help organizations develop programs that use volunteers in meaningful ways to address substantial problems. Therefore, we will dedicate our resources to develop service opportunities targeting serious community problems in the state.

**Priorities in Developing New Service Opportunities**

- Programs that are part of or utilize a comprehensive community strategy.
- Programs or strategies that engage underrepresented populations and those that provide a high return on investment as outlined in 4) Expanding Iowa’s Volunteer Base.
- Programs in geographic areas that are underserved or have the highest need, particularly rural communities.
- New service opportunities to develop community capital in the following areas:
  - Community Safety and Disaster: Keep all community members emotionally and physically safe, with emphasis on efforts to improve rural fire and emergency medical services and disaster response and recovery efforts.
  - Economic Opportunity: Ensure all Iowans have the opportunity for economic success and stability, and help communities fulfill their most pressing needs.
  - Education and Youth Development: Ensure that all Iowa youth have personal assets and protective factors for success, particularly through school achievement and drop-out prevention with an emphasis on the Governor’s plan for literacy and STEM.
  - Environment: Build sustainable communities and preserve our natural resources with an emphasis on energy conservation and improving water quality.
  - Healthy Futures: In support of the Healthiest State initiative, improve the health outcomes of Iowans, particularly by addressing obesity and chronic health conditions, through nutrition, wellness, and rural healthcare.

* Asterisks indicate strategies or tactics for policy development
Targeted Strategies & Tactics for Developing New Service Opportunities

A. Build rural community capacity for programming by focusing on community assets and providing flexibility in requirements.

B. Through our grant making, grant guidelines, and performance measures, encourage the creation of programs that align with ICVS priorities.

C. Spur the development of new national service and volunteer positions through initiatives identified by the Governor’s Council on National Service, including:
   1. “Service Year” programming and a system and policies to support it.
   2. Legislative changes to incentivize service and remove barriers to volunteer program creation and expansion.*
   3. Specific program development efforts around Iowa priorities (rural fire and EMS, water quality etc.)
   4. Expansion of service opportunities and volunteer programs run by faith-based institutions.
   5. Service Enterprise framework for expanding the capacity of nonprofit organizations to create more technical, skilled and high-quality volunteer opportunities.
   6. Partner with funders, both public and private, to give community organizations incentives to utilize volunteers effectively through Service Enterprise or other programming.
   7. Support colleges and K-12 educational institutions to implement targeted community volunteer efforts or national service programs
   8. Work with state agencies to integrate service based solutions, volunteer recruitment, and improved volunteer management into state programming.*
   9. Provide assistance to organizations developing their own volunteer initiatives or service programs through sharing effective models, research, and expertise.

D. Support legislative efforts to increase funding and resources to Iowa organizations that utilize volunteers and national service members to accomplish their charitable missions more efficiently and effectively.*

E. Work with partners and funders to expand programs established in Iowa Code including Iowa Green Corps, Iowa Reading Corps and Iowa Summer Youth Corps.*

F. Strengthen student engagement and learning through expansion of Service Learning opportunities both in school- and community-based settings through partnerships with the Department of Education, Iowa Campus Compact, Iowa State Extension and others.

G. Utilize program models that engage communities and resources to improve school achievement by promoting proven models and best practices, in association with the Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development and other partners.

H. Through the Iowa Mentoring Partnership, work to develop new mentoring programs to ensure all young Iowans have access to a caring adult.

I. Develop and support national service programs that address key challenges facing Iowans, including programs that:
   1. Prevent and resolve social problems that impede economic and human success, such as abuse, violence, or family and legal issues.
   2. Meet basic needs, such as improving housing options for low income Iowans, addressing hunger, or providing transportation to connect Iowans to essential services and educational opportunities.
   3. Support nutrition and community wellness, with a focus on prevention of obesity, including health education and outreach, access to fresh fruits and vegetables through community gardens, improved food choices at schools and in low-income or rural areas, and increased physical activity.

* Asterisks indicate strategies or tactics for policy development
J. Encourage participation in the Iowa Disaster Cadre by awarding value to cadre membership in the grant making process.
Service Development: Demand for Volunteers

2.) Improving Existing Services & Programs – Developing Quality National Service and Volunteer Experiences and Programs through Training, Technical Assistance, and Monitoring

We believe that when developing opportunities to volunteer, we needn’t ask whether it’s more important to create additional opportunities or better opportunities. It is necessary to do both, and the data are clear that the best way to generate more service—whether it be a greater number of volunteers, national service opportunities, or service programs—is to improve the quality of the service. Effective programs have higher retention rates, and with 37.5% of traditional volunteers and more than 15% of national service participants leaving their service early, increasing retention rates through improved screening, placement and volunteer management is one of the most efficient ways to increase volunteerism. In addition, funding for the expansion of service programming is often awarded on a competitive basis, in which quality and efficacy in addressing a need are key factors in determining who is selected. Increasing program quality will bring more funding, and lead to more volunteers, national service participants and service opportunities in Iowa.

Objectives in Improving Existing Services & Programs

- Improved organizational capacity and impact through the use of effective volunteer management practices.
- Stronger national service programs and better member experiences through improved program management and training.
- Improved sustainability of national service or volunteer programs.
- Increased number of quality mentoring programs supported through the Iowa Mentoring Partnership (IMP), following the IMP Strategic Plan.
- Increased quality of disaster preparedness plans, which include disaster response delivered by volunteers and national service programs.
- A stronger knowledge base for volunteer program improvement.

Targeted Strategies and Tactics for Improving Existing Services & Programs

A. Support effective volunteer management practices:

1. Work with Iowa nonprofits to become certified Service Enterprises—organizations that fundamentally leverage volunteers and their skills to successfully deliver on the mission of the organization to be more effective (www.reimaginingservice.org).
2. Increase volunteer manager networking and best practices, by supporting Directors of Volunteers in Agencies (DOVIAs) or similar local efforts.
3. Expand the number of organizations providing local technical assistance and training to volunteer managers through volunteer center development, partnerships with institutions of higher learning and inclusion in nonprofit management trainings.
4. Provide a statewide network of learning and support for volunteer managers and service programs through continued support of the Iowa Nonprofit Summit, program-specific training, and improved web-based trainings and resources.

* Asterisks indicate strategies or tactics for policy development
B. Disseminate and provide training on the “Safer Practices for Screening and Selecting Volunteers to Serve Vulnerable Persons in Iowa” so that organizations can effectively mitigate risk.

C. Implement the Governor’s Council on National Service recommendation of a state or regional national service intermediary organization centralizing grant administration to ensure compliance and allow programs to focus more on programming.

D. Connect or group together volunteer or national service programs, and the program participants, to help replicate successes:
   1. Utilize common measures for program evaluations and performance reports, in order to more easily compare programs both within Iowa and regionally.
   2. Encourage regional or community based collaboration on regional or community based service goals.
   3. Provide tools and strategies for programs operating in the same community to partner with each other.
   4. Maintain online platforms for service programs to share best practices and successes.
   5. Provide training more efficiently through national and regional partnerships with other states and within Iowa among organizations with similar goals or on topics that will help advance all types of organizations.

E. Ensure that supported programs are of high quality, meet community needs and achieve results through:
   1. ICVS certification (Mentoring, Service Enterprise, Service Year etc.).
   2. Program assessment, progress reporting, and evaluation.
   3. Improved program quality assessment tools.
   4. Enhanced training and technical assistance to build organizations’ capacity to measure and evaluate program impact.
   5. Solid program management, enforced through the monitoring and oversight of programs administered by ICVS.
   6. Incorporation of effective volunteer management practices into our existing programs.

F. Advocate for funding that enables the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service to operate at our full capacity to improve services and programs.*

G. Expand funding sources for volunteer management.

H. Offer training, resources and technical assistance to mentoring programs including program-specific trainings and conference events.

I. Train national service program directors, interested volunteer managers, local designated voluntary organizations and AmeriCorps members in disaster preparedness and response, especially the management of spontaneous volunteers.

J. Analyze, collect, and disseminate data relevant to Iowa’s service community, including the annual Volunteering and Civic Life in America report and other state and national reports, to monitor successes and identify opportunities.

K. Work to collect and disseminate Iowa-specific data related to service and volunteerism within Iowa’s nonprofit organizations through partnership with the Iowa Secretary of State and the Iowa Nonprofit Resource Center.

* Asterisks indicate strategies or tactics for policy development
Engagement in Service: Supply of Volunteers

3.) Building a Culture & Climate of Service – Volunteer Promotion & Recognition

Like most behaviors, service and volunteerism are learned behaviors influenced by cultural norms and expectations. According to annual research done for the Volunteering and Civic Life in America report, volunteering is spread out among all demographic groups. Yet, despite this diversity in volunteers, non-volunteers report that they see volunteers as people “different from themselves.” Continued outreach can encourage those who don’t currently volunteer to become engaged, by sending a message that everyone can and should get involved in their community.

Individuals and agencies also report other barriers—both real and perceived—that prevent them from sharing or expanding their service. When there are true barriers preventing service, the ICVS will work with partners to remove these barriers and create an environment that promotes service. To address perceived barriers, the ICVS will demonstrate that there are service and volunteer roles for all Iowans.

These first steps help to engage volunteers in meaningful service opportunities. Then, if those volunteers feel valued and are properly recognized, not only are they more likely to continue to volunteer, but their friends and family are also more likely to be engaged in service opportunities. Therefore, our strategies will involve people in service early in life, expand opportunities to recognize volunteers, build a cultural expectation of service and community engagement, and prevent and eliminate obstacles to service and volunteering.

Objectives in Building a Culture & Climate of Service

- More Iowans self-identify as volunteers due to increased public awareness and more positive branding of volunteerism.
- A stronger cultural expectation for service makes “serving” the norm and “not serving” the exception.
- Volunteers and volunteer programs are appreciated and honored, creating an environment in which others aspire to participate in volunteerism and service.
- State and local leaders value and promote service, service opportunities, and quality volunteer management.
- A more positive climate for growth of service as a strategy, due to the removal of barriers and the creation of incentives for individual volunteers or organizations.

Targeted Strategies and Tactics for Building a Culture & Climate of Service

A. Demonstrate the diverse faces of volunteerism through ICVS marketing and publicity.
B. Promote service by underrepresented individuals in various volunteer sectors (men as mentors, women as board members, young people in service, etc.).
C. Work with local volunteer centers to employ local strategies to ease the transition of the non-volunteer to volunteer, like “bring a friend” promotions for volunteers or volunteer-to-volunteer peer mentoring.
D. Promote the connection between volunteering and community development.
E. Publicize the health, well-being, employment, and educational benefits of service and volunteering.

* Asterisks indicate strategies or tactics for policy development
F. Build the cultural expectation and awareness of service through support of the Governor and Lieutenant Governor’s *Call to Service/What’s Your 50?* Campaign. Look to promote a “service year” for every Iowan or other unified service marketing efforts.

G. Support promotional initiatives of the Corporation for National and Community Service such as Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service, AmeriCorps Opening Day, Mayor and County Recognition Day for National Service, Employers of National Service, Serve Rural or any other efforts that would help support Iowa’s efforts to build a culture of service.

H. Promote youth volunteering, service learning, and family volunteer opportunities to instill the ethic of service in youth.

I. Support and continuously improve statewide volunteer recognition for outstanding individual volunteers, volunteer groups, volunteer management leaders, and quality volunteer programs.

J. Provide platforms for organizations and individuals to highlight their accomplishments, such as by reporting volunteer hours and sharing great stories.

K. Recognize the contributions of skills-based volunteers, in particular those engaged by Service Enterprises.

L. Support employer and workplace volunteer recognition, including through the Give Back Iowa Challenge.

M. Encourage and support local service recognition efforts.

N. Educate nonprofit leaders about the value of effective volunteer management and professional volunteer managers.

O. Identify and utilize the best leaders to encourage participation in service and volunteering.

P. Build relationships to connect elected officials and other policy makers to service programs in their area.

Q. Maintain an active policy committee at the Commission level to identify and advocate for the removal of barriers to success and to educate policy makers (local, state and federal) about the value of service.*

R. Make volunteering and national service a viable option for all Iowans by improving benefits and reducing financial barriers, such as through tax incentives, student debt reduction, and more direct pathways from service to employment.*

* Asterisks indicate strategies or tactics for policy development
Engagement in Service: Supply of Volunteers

4.) Expanding Iowa's Volunteer Base — Volunteer and National Service Recruitment

People are more likely to volunteer if they are asked, and much more likely to volunteer if a trusted source or friend is the one who asks them. This means 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. Therefore, as part of our plan to increase the supply of volunteers we have outlined strategies that utilize more Iowans to invite people to serve.

Furthermore, Iowans are more likely to volunteer if they are invited to volunteer in places that they already congregate. Workplaces are a natural gathering point, yet less than 1.5% of volunteers are connected to their main volunteer opportunity through their employer. Research shows that workplace volunteerism benefits both the employee and the employer through increased recruitment, retention, engagement, and health of employees. Accordingly, we have included strategies to increase the number of employers that encourage volunteering.

Finally, we have listed specific strategies for volunteers whose engagement in service has dual benefit. For at-risk youth and Iowans with disabilities, service pays extra dividends by increasing future employment success and long term wellbeing. Iowans over 55 years of age and students are populations in transitional periods of life—graduation or retirement—when they are most likely to leave the state. Service can offer an important remedy to the in our efforts to retain these college graduates and retirees. By engaging people in their communities through service, bonds can be created that graduation and retirement will not break.

Objectives in Expanding Iowa’s Volunteer Base

- More Iowans are asked to serve in direct and indirect ways.
- **Additional Iowa workplaces offer service opportunities.**
- Volunteer and national service programs are diversified and better connected with those who are underrepresented as volunteers or whose service provides maximum value, including: Iowans age 55+, disconnected youth (those at-risk for or currently out of school or unemployed), students, Iowans with disabilities, veterans, minorities, and rural residents.
- More volunteers are generated, particularly to serve in rural areas and to address the state’s most pressing needs

Targeted Strategies and Tactics for Expanding Iowa’s Volunteer Base

A. Develop and utilize a statewide volunteer recruitment marketing strategy for [www.volunteeriowa.org](http://www.volunteeriowa.org) (the ICVS web-based volunteer portal).
B. Utilize social media to ask Iowans to serve and share stories about their service.
C. Support local AmeriCorps Alumni chapters to engage alumni in national service recruitment.
D. Train and persuade leaders (such as CEOs, school principals, mayors, Governor, clergy) to call on Iowans to serve.
E. Enhance and market volunteer opportunities available to Iowans where they congregate, including places of employment.
F. Create a state employee volunteering policy.*

* Asterisks indicate strategies or tactics for policy development
G. Through the Employer Volunteer Initiative or similar strategies, work with employers, large and small, on identifying strategies for engaging employees at all skill levels in volunteering, especially those nearing retirement.

H. Develop targeted marketing and recruitment efforts aimed at underrepresented volunteers and populations with high returns on investment.

I. Partner with organizations serving targeted demographic groups to help engage those populations in volunteering.

J. Support local or statewide volunteer efforts that provide training on developing volunteer opportunities for targeted demographic groups.

K. Support targeted recruitment efforts for underrepresented volunteers, utilizing existing opportunities like the Coaches’ Challenge, Million Women Mentors, etc.

L. Increase the number of disconnected and at risk youth participating in community-based and school-based service learning opportunities, to help them experience making a positive impact in their communities. Incentivize this population’s participation through ICVS supported programs.

M. Connect more young people to service opportunities through community-based and/or school-based service-learning.

N. Expand the number of college students volunteering and pursuing national service following graduation through our partnership with Campus Compact.

O. Promote the empowering benefit of service to Iowans with disabilities and disconnected youth.

P. Promote the transitional benefits of national service and volunteerism to veterans through Home Base Iowa.

Q. Diversify the partnerships that Volunteer Iowa has across the state in order to better outreach to minority populations.

R. Investigate a state or regional framework for addressing rural volunteer challenges.

S. Spread the Service Enterprise model as a way to recruit more skills-based volunteers.
Special Plan Expanding the Volunteer Base for Iowans Age 55+

A. Use expanded features in the ICVS recruitment portal to create a “skill bank” of volunteers with life experiences for better use by charitable organizations.

B. Utilize targeted messaging and train existing programs on how best to recruit and utilize Iowans age 55+.

C. Partner with organizations currently serving Iowans 55+ to recruit and develop opportunities to serve.

D. Explore tax incentives that encourage mature Iowans to volunteer, such as those related to volunteer drivers and property taxes.*

E. Expand counties covered by Senior Corps programs to increase volunteerism by individuals aged 55+.

F. Partner with the Iowa Department on Aging and local Area Agencies on Aging to demonstrate the value of connecting Iowans 55+ to local communities, from a skill level perspective and a retention perspective.

G. Conduct outreach to nonprofits, the Iowa Department of Education, other state agencies, and higher education institutions to develop a list of high need volunteer positions to better connect to 55+ volunteers, particularly those providing tutoring to youth.

H. Recommend the Iowa Department on Aging take specific action to better engage mature Iowans in service.

I. Promote employer volunteer opportunities that help individuals transition into retirement.

J. Promote and highlight research supporting the “business case for volunteering” with employers as well as the health benefits of volunteering for individuals, particularly those 55+, such as:
   1. Time sharing or flexible work schedules for Iowans 55+ to keep employees in the work force longer and spark more volunteer service among this demographic.
   2. Employer volunteer programs that include employees 55+, including making “pro-bono” connections for certain high need professions (information technology, marketing, accounting, legal etc.).

K. Support meetings, training and funding opportunities for Senior Corps programs.

L. Evaluate and seek grant and fee-for-service resources for senior volunteer programs.

M. Increase effective volunteer management practices at Senior Corps host sites through training, technical assistance, and resource sharing.

N. 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 for afterschool programs, mentoring, and other service opportunities.

O. Use national service in creative ways, such as prioritizing AmeriCorps program models that utilize members age 55+, using AmeriCorps VISTA resources to build capacity of Senior Corps programs, or expanding the efforts of existing Senior Corps programs via AmeriCorps funding.

* Asterisks indicate strategies or tactics for policy development
Connection of Volunteer Supply and Demand

5). Building Iowa’s Volunteer Infrastructure

A healthy volunteer infrastructure is key for ensuring that all other components of service and volunteerism work together. Research from the United Nations on volunteering worldwide shows that, while specific ways volunteering is implemented may differ from place to place, a healthy volunteer infrastructure will always make volunteerism a better and more impactful community resource.

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. Improving technology and our online volunteer infrastructure can better facilitate this connection. We outline strategies that will strengthen Iowa’s volunteer infrastructure to provide a shared understanding of volunteerism and its value. A healthy volunteer infrastructure creates an environment in which diverse best practices are shared and the full potential of volunteers is realized.

Objectives in Building Iowa’s Volunteer Infrastructure

- Effective statewide coverage by volunteer centers or volunteer connector organizations achieved, including:
  - Support for statewide issue-specific or population-based volunteer infrastructure or capacity building initiatives.
  - Support for place-based volunteer infrastructure and capacity building efforts across Iowa.
  - Increased effort in developing new programs or organizations that build local volunteer infrastructure.
- Expanded ability of communities to connect volunteers to needs during times of disaster.
- Increased awareness of Volunteer Iowa and the resources it offers for building service infrastructure.
- Increased internal capacity of the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service to serve as an exemplary state service commission.

Targeted Strategies and Tactics for Building Iowa’s Volunteer Infrastructure

A. Support, strengthen, and sustain existing volunteer centers and other volunteer connector organizations.

B. Expand the areas of the state served by volunteer connector organizations (such as volunteer centers, United Ways, RSVPs, information and referral centers) and Service Enterprise Hubs.

1. Determine if other local organizations such as chambers of commerce, hospital volunteer offices, libraries, or faith communities are serving or could serve as community volunteer referral organizations.
2. Work with the Corporation for National and Community Service to allow RSVP to be used as a volunteer connector for people of all ages in areas that are unserved or underserved by other volunteer centers.*
3. Make available best practices and resources on starting a volunteer center or volunteer connector organization.

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4. Utilize research and best practices on community asset building to develop a more flexible “rural” volunteer connector model to expand coverage of volunteer infrastructure, including one that can be enhanced using the Volunteer Generation Fund. Work with cities and towns to engage volunteers in meeting community needs and to develop volunteer connecting services in unserved or underserved areas.

5. Promote the Cities of Service model (www.citiesofservice.org) with mayors to build local volunteer infrastructure.

6. Train and support a diverse network of volunteer connector organizations or other community based entities to serve as regional or community based Service Enterprise Hubs.

C. Provide technical assistance to businesses serving as volunteer connectors, such as those establishing employee volunteer programs.

D. Develop statewide volunteer disaster management tracking tools.

E. Support local spontaneous disaster engagement plans and community and voluntary organizations active in disaster (COADs and VOADs).

F. Utilize mobilization and deployment strategies for disaster that will support Iowa’s emergency volunteer infrastructure.

G. Develop a mobilization plan for national service participants in Iowa that enables members, program directors and/or commission staff to respond to local, state or national disasters.

H. Promote awareness of the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service and the services it provides.

I. Conduct outreach to fill gaps in the use of the Volunteer Iowa portal as a statewide online volunteer recruitment tool (www.volunteeriowa.org). To increase the number of participating agencies and available volunteer opportunities:
   1. Encourage nontraditional partners like libraries or chambers of commerce to establish county- or community-based volunteer referral recruitment hubs.
   2. Encourage local communities to designate staff and/or an agency to administer a local version of Get Connected, which would feed information into the state system.
   3. Promote the benefits of the system for web-based volunteer management.

J. ICVS develops and follows a strategic work plan, which has connections to the State Service Plan.

K. Use the power of volunteers to help implement all facets of this plan and the operations of the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service as a Certified Service Enterprise organization.

* Asterisks indicate strategies or tactics for policy development
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