

## **Pennsylvania State Service Plan 2018 – 2020**

### **PennSERVE: The Governor’s Office of Citizen Service**

**Mission:** To encourage, develop, and facilitate volunteer and citizen community service, which builds upon the talents, strengths, opportunities, and challenges of people and communities in ways which enhance the quality of life for all citizens of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

**Structure:** In 1987, under the advice of the Secretary of Labor and Industry, Harris Wofford, Governor Robert P. Casey created the Governor’s Office of Citizen Service, or PennSERVE, to promote and organize statewide service.

The PennSERVE Community Service Advisory Board supports, advises, and consults with PennSERVE on its core mission of encouraging civic engagement through planned and structured community service. It focuses on promotion of the service ethic and volunteerism in its strategic planning to produce and implement a long term, comprehensive vision and plan of action for community service initiatives throughout the state.

Within the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry, PennSERVE has five full-time staff and receives some support from additional staff throughout L&I, including the Bureau of Financial Management, Human Resources, Information Technology, Press, Policy, and more.

**Core Function:** Each year, PennSERVE awards approximately \$10 million in federal funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service to AmeriCorps programs in Pennsylvania. AmeriCorps is a national program that provides human and financial resources to help tackle some of our toughest problems. AmeriCorps produces a triple-bottom line return investment, for those who serve, those who are served, and for Pennsylvania’s communities.

In 2017, PennSERVE is administering 19 AmeriCorps programs and one planning grant that address the Commonwealth’s needs in the areas of education, economic opportunity, healthy futures, veterans and military families, environmental stewardship, and capacity building. Over 1,300 AmeriCorps members will be engaged in these efforts.

**State Service Plan Overview:** The three-year State Service Plan is a vision and roadmap for national service and volunteering in Pennsylvania; it provides priorities and strategies for 2018 through 2020. To inform the plan, PennSERVE gathered input from national service programs within the commonwealth, professional volunteer coordinators, and other interested members of the public through an online survey, small group sessions, and individual interviews. 210 people completed the survey and 25 participated in follow-up interviews. In three small group sessions (Senior Corps of Pennsylvania Directors Association, volunteer coordinators in Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties, and AmeriCorps State program staff), approximately 95 people generated and ranked ideas.

Through the survey, Pennsylvanians noted numerous populations that lack resources or need additional support, with children aged 0-18 and adults aged 60+ as the populations most in need. The top concern was Economic Opportunity, followed by Healthy Futures, then Education and Literacy. Respondents listed numerous programs and organizations that address community issues and the majority were aware of national service programs in their area. Only 38% were aware of volunteer centers.

**In a state as diverse as Pennsylvania, meeting the needs of all communities will require a comprehensive approach through service and volunteerism via multiple program models and service interventions.** This State Service Plan seeks to strengthen and grow national service and community volunteerism to meet a diverse array of local needs and utilize the strengths of our local communities. Service and volunteerism are tools, not the end product.

The State Service Plan includes five priorities:

- Utilize AmeriCorps as a Strategy to Address Pennsylvania's Needs
- Strengthen Existing AmeriCorps Programs
- Collaborate Across the Streams of National Service
- Recognize and Support Volunteerism in Pennsylvania
- Increase awareness of PennSERVE and National Service in Pennsylvania

This Plan also includes two cross-cutting priorities: Race and Gender Equity and Inclusion and Increasing Service for Adults 55 and Older.

**State Service Plan Implementation:** Pennsylvania's State Service Plan outlines what we want for service and volunteerism in the Commonwealth. In some areas, it is quite prescriptive; in others, there is room for creativity and development. Full implementation of this plan relies on continued, and increased, funding; a strong and steady Board and staff; and support from partners across Pennsylvania. While we may not execute all elements within the next three years, we will follow these priorities and implement strategies that are realistic and achievable given available resources and constraints.

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### **Cross-Cutting Priority: Race and Gender Equity and Inclusion**

PennSERVE recognizes the power of National Service to break down social barriers and address issues of racial and gender inequity. To that end, PennSERVE embraces the principles of race and gender equity and inclusion and will take the following action steps.

- Conduct a racial and gender equity impact assessment of PennSERVE's grantmaking procedures.
- Offer race and gender equity and inclusion training to AmeriCorps program staff.
- Share resources and encourage AmeriCorps programs to take explicit steps to embed race and gender equity and inclusion in their program designs.

### **Priority Area: Utilize AmeriCorps as a Strategy to Address Pennsylvania's Needs**

#### Strategy: Conduct Outreach to PA Communities

- Prioritize Formula funding for new programs and/or planning grants that focus on Economic Opportunity (improve economic well-being and security of economically disadvantaged people; help economically disadvantaged people, including at risk youth, to have improved access to services that enhance financial literacy; transition into or remain in safe, healthy, affordable housing; and/or have improved employability leading to increased success in becoming employed) and Healthy Futures (improve access to primary and preventive health care for communities; increase seniors' ability to remain in their own homes with the same or improved quality of life for as long as possible; and/or increase physical activity and improve nutrition in youth with the purpose of reducing childhood obesity).

- Facilitate in-person and virtual information sessions about AmeriCorps and funding opportunities, with a focus on geographic areas underserved by AmeriCorps.
- Create “AmeriCorps-at-a-Glance” marketing materials to help organizations assess which AmeriCorps resource is best fit (e.g. Should the organization apply for an AmeriCorps program grant or apply to be a Service Site for an existing program? Or should they apply to be a VISTA Sponsor?).
- Train all PennSERVE staff and Advisory Board members on “AmeriCorps-at-a-Glance” to help promote the broad network of AmeriCorps resources

Strategy: Cultivate Strong Grant Applications and Programs

- Publish detailed grant application instructions and provide resources to include sample budgets, sample AmeriCorps member and program director position descriptions, and sample logic models.
- Facilitate in-person and virtual application and grant-writing technical assistance workshops for potential grant applicants.
- Provide planning grants to support organizations that are interested in developing AmeriCorps programs.
- Develop an AmeriCorps start-up institute for planning grantees and new programs.

Strategy: Emphasize and Strengthen the Workforce Development Aspects of National Service Programs

- Encourage AmeriCorps programs and members to engage with AmeriCorps Alums, the national network that connects over one million alumni of all AmeriCorps programs who have served since 1994, including the development of local Pennsylvania chapters.
- Promote the Employers of National Service program as an avenue to increase economic opportunity for AmeriCorps members, whereby employers have increased access to a dedicated, highly qualified, and mission-oriented pool of potential employees, and national service alumni have additional opportunities to apply their skills in the workplace.

Strategy: Increase Capacity of AmeriCorps Programs to Respond to Man-Made and Natural Disasters

- Maintain database of AmeriCorps programs trained and available for deployment.
- Explore partnerships with the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) and the Corporation for National and Community Service’s Disaster Response Unit.
- Develop plan to increase training of AmeriCorps members in disaster mitigation, response, and recovery.

**Priority Area: Strengthen Existing AmeriCorps Programs**

- Conduct annual pre-award and mid-year assessments of PennSERVE sub-grantees; and provide training and technical assistance to meet identified needs and/or areas of risk.
- Train all sub-grantees on PennSERVE policies and procedures in fiscal compliance; conduct at least one online or in-person session for grantee fiscal staff each year.
- Revise and formalize the annual sub-grantee monitoring plan, utilizing the America’s Service Commissions risk assessment tool and building on PennSERVE’s strong desk monitoring procedure.
- Facilitate peer learning opportunities through mentoring, program exchange visits, and/or learning communities.

**Priority Area: Collaborate Across the Streams of National Service**

- Develop and maintain staff, member, and volunteer contact lists for AmeriCorps National Direct programs, VISTA programs, and Senior Corps projects with AmeriCorps members and Senior Corps volunteers in Pennsylvania.
- Maintain communication with AmeriCorps National Direct programs, VISTA programs, and Senior Corps programs.
- Invite AmeriCorps National and VISTA members to annual AmeriCorps Week event.
- Participate in the Philadelphia National Service Task Force and Western PA National Service Network.
- Facilitate at least one networking and/or training opportunity for staff and/or members of AmeriCorps State and National programs, VISTA, and Senior Corps.

**Priority Area: Recognize and Support Volunteerism in Pennsylvania**

Strategy: Recognize and Promote Volunteerism

- Continue partnership with L&I Press Office to recognize and support volunteerism through L&I social media; dedicate at least two posts per month (25%) to traditional volunteerism to include stories of Pennsylvania volunteers and volunteer groups, promotion of volunteer centers/volunteer connector agencies, and resources to encourage volunteerism.

Strategy: Support Professional Volunteer Managers

- Include a section on the PennSERVE website to post volunteer management resources and to link to local volunteer centers and online volunteer matching services.
- Explore facilitating professional development opportunities for volunteer management professionals.

Strategy: Develop Partnerships and Resources to Fulfill and Grow this Priority Area

- Develop or re-establish partnerships with local volunteer centers/connector agencies.
- Develop plan to apply for the CNCS Volunteer Generation Fund at next opportunity (anticipated 2020, pending federal funding).

**Priority Area: Increase awareness of PennSERVE and National Service in Pennsylvania**

- Develop or re-establish key partnerships such as Pennsylvania Association of Nonprofit Organizations, United Ways, and Pennsylvania Campus Compact.
- Develop a monthly or quarterly e-newsletter to highlight national service, volunteerism, and resources and opportunities available through PennSERVE and its partners.
- Issue Annual Report by March of each year.
- Continue partnership with L&I Press Office to promote PennSERVE and National Service through L&I social media.
- Notify elected officials of grant awards and programming in their districts.
- Strengthen monitoring of sub-grantee AmeriCorps branding compliance.

**Cross-Cutting Priority: Increase Service for Pennsylvanians Age 55 and Older**

- Through Priority #3, increase communication with Senior Corps programs and the Senior Corps of Pennsylvania Directors Association; and facilitate at least one cross-stream networking and/or training opportunity.
- Support the growth and/or development of Pennsylvania Senior Corps projects by assisting the CNCS State Office with potential partnerships and joint presentations.
- Through Priority #4, include resources on engaging older adults as volunteers on the PennSERVE website.
- Encourage AmeriCorps State programs to engage adults age 55+ as AmeriCorps members; and to develop mutually beneficial partnerships with local Senior Corps projects.