



Always Flexible!
Oregon State Service Plan
2009 - 2012

INTRODUCTION

Oregon's National and Community Service Family has continued to increase both the quantity and types of collaborative efforts undertaken to expand statewide service and volunteerism.

Today, our eight primary National & Community Service Family members collaborate regularly. They are: Oregon Volunteers! Commission for Voluntary Action & Service; Oregon State Office, Corporation for National & Community Service; Oregon Department of Education; Oregon Campus Compact; Corporate Volunteer Council; Seniors Serving Oregon Coalition; State of Oregon Volunteer Managers Group; Portland State University; and Volunteer Center Network of Oregon.

In addition to meeting regularly, each organization also has an appointed membership on one or more official commission entities:

Commission: *CNCS State Office, Oregon Campus Compact, Seniors Serving Oregon Coalition, Corporate Volunteer Council, and Volunteer Center Network of Oregon, Portland State University*

State Committee on Volunteerism: *CNCS State Office, Oregon Campus Compact, Corporate Volunteer Council, Volunteer Center Network of Oregon. State of Oregon Volunteer Managers Group*

State Committee on Civic Engagement: *CNCS State Office, Oregon Campus Compact, Volunteer Center Network of Oregon, Oregon Department of Education*

AmeriCorps Program Committee: *CNCS State Office*

Each of these entities provides another outlet through which we strengthen engagement between our organizations as well as with Oregon's greater volunteerism and service community.

Since 2004 we have regularly engaged Oregon's greater volunteerism and service community through the development and implementation of the State Committee on Volunteerism, which was a major goal of the 2002-05 Unified State Plan.

Other service partners represented on that committee, and therefore with a variety of statewide service activities are: Local DOVIAs, United Ways of Oregon, Oregon AARP, NAVPLG, Oregon Mentors, Oregon Public Broadcasting, US Forest Service, Oregon Parks & Recreation Department, Action Without Borders/Idealist, Oregon Society of Hospital Directors of Volunteers, Oregon State University Extension Service, Oregon After School for Kids (ASK), and Oregon Recreation & Parks Association.

WHAT ARE THE COMPONENTS OF THE STATE SERVICE PLAN?

Since we view all of our collaborative work as that of a single unit, Commissioners and partners have elected to maintain one mission statement and one values statement as well as unified programmatic goals for both the Commission Strategic Plan and the State Service Plan. This decision allows us to speak with one voice and to move more quickly toward meeting shared goals.

Mission

Oregon Volunteers! promotes and supports AmeriCorps, volunteerism and civic engagement to strengthen Oregon communities.

Values

Community

Strengthening Oregon through service and volunteerism is the heart of everything we do.

Diversity

Commission programs, members and staff strive to reflect the full diversity of all Oregonians. We are especially attentive to issues of diversity including: race, gender, political affiliation, class, education, geography, interests, disability, sexual orientation, age, culture.

Effectiveness

The results of an efficient, effective, strategic use of resources will further the commission's mission. We will make decisions in line with short and long term priorities.

Mutual Benefit - Gyoto Ryoung

We take intentional action to create a triple win (win³) – a win for the commission, for our partners, and for Oregon communities.

Integrity

We do what we say we'll do and only what we are able to do.

Partnership

We invest time in building relationships, honoring diverse perspectives, and creating win³ solutions.

AmeriCorps Goal

High quality AmeriCorps programs continue to help meet local needs identified by communities.

Civic Engagement Goal

Increase citizen involvement among Oregon residents to build connections within and across communities.

Volunteerism Goal

More Oregon residents are mobilized to meet local needs identified by communities.

In each of these goal areas, collaborative work is planned over the next three years that will engage all of the partners in moving service and volunteerism forward throughout the state. Unless otherwise stated, it is anticipated that all National Service Family members will be involved in these efforts.

AMERICORPS STATE SERVICE PLAN

High quality AmeriCorps programs continue to help meet local needs identified by communities

AmeriCorps*State/National/VISTA partnerships continue to mature in their outreach to Oregon's rural communities. From its beginning, Commissioners and other partners were committed to making AmeriCorps resources available to all communities in the state, but were hampered by the rural areas' general lack of administrative and financial capacity to manage a complex program.

As a result, the Commission has worked hard to create a series of intermediary programs that offer small organizations the opportunity to sponsor a single member. Today, over 85% of the Commission's portfolio is composed of intermediary organizations.

AmeriCorps*VISTA programming now includes four statewide and three regional intermediary sponsors that also place members in single service locations. Since 2001, ESD 112, through its Northwest Service Academy AmeriCorps program, has provided rural placement sites focused on environmental programming throughout the state. We anticipate that this successful intermediary model will continue throughout the next three years.

In addition, all parties have made an ongoing commitment to insure that members placed rurally do not feel totally isolated during their service experience. This requires us to work creatively to insure that single placement members have opportunities to interact with their peers, both geographically and programmatically.

We do this by providing opportunities for AmeriCorps*State/National*VISTA members to meet by geographic region at the annual AmeriCorps Kick-off. At that time they all are given time to begin developing relationships that can continue at the local level, and might include things such as partnering on national days of service or through other training and social activities. They also receive a roster of members in their geographical region, which they are encouraged to utilize to maintain communications throughout the year. We will continue with these successful activities and also test additional mechanisms for facilitating geographic gatherings - these include, but are not limited to: regional trainings; social events hosted by Commissioners or other community organizations, and national day of service event coordination.

We also continue to grapple with our cross-program desire to engage more persons with disabilities as AmeriCorps participants. The legal challenges related to SSI-D benefits eligibility continue to be a hindrance to our efforts. One of the most innovative projects that we have developed to bring more disabled Oregonians into service, thereby providing them with opportunities to learn more about AmeriCorps and to work side-by-side with AmeriCorps members, is through our Days of Service mini-grant program.

Using Disability Inclusion funds, we provide mini-grants to AmeriCorps members who work with youth from disability organizations to plan and implement Global Youth Service Day projects. In addition to the leadership development opportunity for AmeriCorps members, agencies serving people with disabilities as well as disabled youth are given the opportunity to learn more about national service opportunities.

In 2009, we will expand this program as a Semester of Service pilot project and provide funding for AmeriCorps members to lead service and learning activities from MLK Day through Global Youth Service Days with youth from disability organizations. Dependent on success, we hope that this will become another ongoing leadership opportunity for AmeriCorps members across the state.

Another important component of strong AmeriCorps programming in our state is attention to the development and support of AmeriCorps program staff from all AmeriCorps programs operating in the state, including State, National, EAP and VISTA. We do this through quarterly Oregon AmeriCorps program staff meetings, as well as an annual multi-day training conference, which we co-sponsor with the Washington Commission on National and Community Service.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT SERVICE PLAN

Increase citizen involvement among Oregon residents to build connections within and across communities

Since 2005, the Commission has identified civic engagement as a distinct programming area. The factors identified by the CNCS Office of Research and Policy Development in the 2007 Civic Life Index have provided an even stronger framework in which we work within the state. By recognizing that opportunities for enhanced engagement by Oregon residents exceed volunteering (including volunteering, number of volunteer hours and regular volunteering), we are able to build on strengthening civic life through many of the other eleven factors in the civic life index.

We encourage knowledge of and engagement in the political and policy systems of our communities as a means of creating dialogue and authentic collaboration. The Commission insures that all AmeriCorps members participate in civic engagement training that provides an opportunity for members to better understand issues facing their community or their nation. During each session of the Oregon legislature, AmeriCorps members are invited to participate in AmeriCorps Day at the Capitol, which provides them with education on the legislative process, as well as an opportunity to witness the process first-hand. In addition, Oregon Campus Compact has developed and will maintain a strong voter registration and education program on its campuses throughout the state.

One of our major mechanisms for providing Oregonians with tools for authentic engagement is our biannual Civic Engagement Conference. The conference is one of our attempts to engage participation from beyond the national service family. In addition to participation from all of the partner organizations and all streams of service, we bring together representatives of community-based organizations who are interested in creating dialogue and community collaboration to solve some of the urgent issues facing the state. Our next conference will be held in fall, 2009.

K-H Service Learning is another cornerstone of civic engagement programming in Oregon. Oregon Campus Compact (ORCC) host an AmeriCorps*VISTA Service Learning team. The ORCC members are placed in compact member campuses across the state to develop partnerships between higher education institutions, K-12 schools, and community-based organizations for service learning projects. ORCC also sponsors an AmeriCorps Students in Service program on its member campuses.

These activities are in direct alignment with the CNCS Strategic Focus to engage more higher education students in service to community.

In addition, Northwest Service Academy, the Oregon State Service Corps (AmeriCorps*State) and Clara Barton VISTA Corps, all place individual members as Service Learning Coordinators in K-12 schools. As part of the AmeriCorps Kick-Off, we have historically provided members in service learning positions with an 8-hour training on basics of service learning.

Days of Service are another important element of our Civic Engagement efforts statewide. Traditionally we have offered Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service mini-grants to local community-based organizations who partner with an AmeriCorps*State/National/VISTA member. Beginning in 2009 we will expand that opportunity to also include Cesar Chavez Day activities.

In addition, most of the partners are working together to implement Take Care of Oregon Days (statewide days of service) during the month of May 2009 as part of the state's sesquicentennial celebration.

All of these Days of Service activities are supported by AmeriCorps*VISTA members placed at the Commission offices by the CNCS Oregon State Office.

Volunteerism State Service Plan:

More Oregon residents are mobilized to meet local needs identified by communities.

Community volunteers continue to serve as the glue that bonds the National Service Family members with the broader service community. Our State Committee on Volunteerism is the state's first attempt in its 150-year history to bring organizations interested in and committed to volunteerism together in an intentional manner.

Historically, volunteerism entities in the state have been silo-ed either geographically, programmatically, or both. Very little interaction has occurred within the statewide volunteer community prior to the establishment of the State Committee. As a result of bringing representatives from across the state together, Oregon has moved rapidly toward developing a cohesive statewide network of support for volunteer managers and community volunteers.

Working through the State Committee, we have increased the number of certified Volunteer Centers from 3 - 5, and had hoped for an increased number of centers before 2009. However, between the stalled economy, the loss of timber revenue, and the small staffs in possible host organizations, we have no more centers than we did in 2006. On a positive note, the 5 centers currently in existence are stronger and more cohesive than they have ever been in the past.

We have written a Policy Option package for the state's 2009-2011 budget process that will provide much needed infrastructure for Volunteer Center development, along with other capacity building efforts in volunteer management. If we do not succeed in obtaining state funding, we will pursue private foundations to support our continued work in this field.

Build capacity for volunteer management throughout the state.

We are doing much in this regard directly through our national service participants. In every AmeriCorps*State/National program operating in Oregon at least 50% of the members are engaged in recruiting and/or supporting community volunteers as a major component of their service description. In addition, more than half of the state's AmeriCorps*VISTAs are assigned as Volunteer Coordinators.

In addition, the State Committee on Volunteerism, in partnership with the Volunteer Center Network of Oregon is currently updating the statewide training program we originally implemented in 2005. Through the State Committee, we will offer a menu of curriculum alternatives for trainers to use in teaching both Volunteer Management 101 and 201. Using a Train-the-Trainer model, volunteer management professionals from throughout the state will go through a commission-sponsored certification process that will elevate the status of training in all parts of the state.

Another capacity-building project undertaken during the previous planning period that we plan to duplicate in the 2009-2012 window is sponsorship for an Advanced Volunteer Management conference.

Partnering with two Volunteer Managers Associations, we brought together 237 volunteer management professions from across North America to participate in the conference, which was held at Portland State University. Training was delivered by five of the world's most recognized authorities on volunteer management: Martin Cowling, Susan Ellis, Linda Graff, Rick Lynch, and Steve McCurley.

In addition to specific volunteer management training, we recognize that there is a need for additional training and educational opportunities for both volunteer managers and community volunteers. As a result of our membership on the Steering Committee for the new Nonprofit Association of Oregon (NAO), we will offer specific strands on both nonprofit management and volunteer management at the Civic Engagement conference in 2009, and again in 2011. This will be the first time in the state's history that the nonprofit community has been invited to come together for training. NAO has more than 850 members in only its second year of existence. Training is one of the highest needs identified by the membership.

The state also continues to face the challenges associated with disaster volunteers and their management and supervision. The infrequency of major disaster occurrences in the state leads to high turnover in trained volunteers. They leave to find a volunteer position in which their skills can be better, and more frequently, utilized.

To counteract this historical problem, all members of the Oregon State Service Corps AmeriCorps*State program and all members of the Clara Barton AmeriCorps*VISTA program are trained as disaster responders and are available to respond to disasters both within and outside the state. They become a trained backbone of responders for the American Red Cross.

However, there is very little formal infrastructure in the state for dealing with spontaneous (untrained) community volunteers who are expected to arise in the event of a major disaster occurrence.

In winter of 2007-2008, western Oregon experienced severe winter storms that resulted in a Presidential disaster declaration in eight counties along the coast and in the coastal range. This was the first time the state had received a Presidential declaration in 11 year.

Unfortunately, only the county with the least damage was served by a Volunteer Center. Thus, the majority of impacted communities were left to fend for themselves in the recruitment and placement of spontaneous disaster volunteers. The Commission, with the help of the AmeriCorps*VISTA Volunteer Management Support Coordinator assigned to our office by the CNCS State Office, created a state account in the Help In Disaster system and began offering support to local communities. It was the first step in a long process of preparedness that will continue in the coming planning period.

As a result of the storms and the Long Term Recovery efforts, the Commission has been invited to sit on the Governor's Disaster Recovery Cabinet. We have also increased our level of involvement with Oregon Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (ORVOAD) and now serve on the Executive Committee for that group. It is our plan to expand the work we do in developing Volunteer Centers and teaching Volunteer Management to include development of community-level VOAD organizations that will be in existence and ready to become immediately operational in the event of future occurrences.

Both the Commission and the CNCS Oregon State Office also serve on the State Citizen Corps Council.

Recognize the contributions of volunteers in Oregon

Through the State Committee on Volunteerism, we have reinstated the Oregon Governor's Volunteer Awards. This is a process in which most of the partners are engaged at one level or another. In the most recent year of the program, we received slightly more than 100 nominations and hosted more than 250 people at the recognition luncheon.

In addition, Oregon Campus Compact conducts a recognition program for its campus programs and students.

Promote and publicize volunteerism statewide

Ongoing promotion activities will include the following -

- Annual sponsorship of Oregon Volunteer Week, which includes promotion of volunteerism and support of local volunteer recognition efforts.
- Bi-annual Voluntary Action Day at the Capitol during which service partners and volunteer organizations educate state legislators and staff about volunteer efforts taking place in the state.
- Continuation and expansion of Oregon Volunteers! website which provides resources and references on volunteerism to both organizations and community volunteers. Volunteer Centers are located throughout the state.
- Continued sponsorship of annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service activities, including distribution of mini-grants that are awarded to national and community service partners who work with at least one additional stream of service.
- Promotion and support of the Oregon Volunteer and Community Service Act, which was passed by the Oregon Legislature in 2007 and places increased priority on citizen participation in addressing the complex problems facing local communities, encourage local community leaders to implement strategies that expand civic participation, promote the concept and practice of corporation citizenship, and foster the alignment of community volunteer resources with the goals of the state. The law also provides a framework for stronger partnerships between governments at all levels and local community groups, as an effective means to address community needs and foster a collective commitment to lifelong community service.
- Promote and support the Oregon Volunteer Screening Act, which was also passed by the Oregon legislature in 2007. The bill requires the Commission to adopt "recommended best practices" on volunteer screening for organizations and entities who utilize volunteers, especially those that have unsupervised access to children or other vulnerable populations on a regular basis, and to establish and maintain an educational program to aid organizations and entities, parents and guardians of children, volunteers, and children in protecting the safety of children who are under the care, custody of others. We will continue to disperse information about the best practices document through our website and other training events in which we are engaged.

A new project that will gain momentum in the 2009-2012 planning period is an expanded education role for the Commission and its partners in acting as a conduit for information on laws and administrative rules related to volunteerism from Oregon's major regulatory agencies. These include: Bureau of Labor and Industry (wage and hour laws); Commerce Department (Worker's Comp Division); Employment Department (unemployment insurance); and Revenue Department (taxation).

Currently there is little or no commonality in defining volunteer roles and activities in these agencies. Neither is there a standard for determining eligibility (or non-eligibility) for benefits for

volunteers amongst the agencies. We will work through them to insure that all organizations in the state have access to accurate information about each of the regulatory entities.

OTHER AREAS OF FOCUS

For the past twelve years, the Commission has partnered with the Washington Commission for National and Community Service to host an annual training for program staff. Beginning in 2002, that partnership was expanded to include the Oregon and Washington CNCS State Offices and all of their Senior Corps and AmeriCorps VISTA projects. Beginning in 2005, Learn and Serve partners were also invited to attend. We anticipate this joint program staff training model to continue during the period covered by this plan.

The two states and four entities have also jointly sponsored an annual forum for national service participant reflection. The Northwest Service Symposium, which is open to participants from all streams of national service and all age groups, is a juried event at which participant reflections are demonstrated through written or spoken word, dance, drama or music, as well as art. We anticipate that the Symposium will also continue through the period covered by this plan.

We anticipate an expansion of the partners' relationships with AARP as a resource to existing service programs and partners in Oregon to address the issues of volunteer generation (Boomers) and capacity building for programs.

Requested Corporation for National and Community Service Support for Plan Implementation

Most important is the continued recognition of and support by Headquarters for our flexible and adventurous efforts to bring cohesive programming to partners and organizations throughout the state.