

# Nevada Volunteers

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## State Service Plan

2010 -2013



*Strengthening Nevada through  
Americorps and Volunteerism*

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## SNAPSHOT OF THE STATE OF NEVADA

Located in the western part of the United States, Nevada is unique in several ways. For all but two years between 1995 and 2007, Nevada was the fastest – growing state in terms of percentage increase in populations. It has been the fastest-growing state in all of the last five U. S. decennial censuses.<sup>1</sup>

It is the seventh-largest state, spanning more than 110,500 square miles, yet is only 35<sup>th</sup> in population with an estimated 2.5 million residents. Between 2005 and 2007, nearly a half-million people migrated to Nevada.

More than 86% of Nevada's land is controlled by the federal government. Roughly 1.6% of the state is tribal land of various Washoe, Paiute and Shoshone groups.<sup>2</sup>

Nevada's population is concentrated in three urban areas: Las Vegas/Henderson in the south and Reno/Sparks and Carson City in the northwest –which account for 90% of the state's population. Subsequently, 10% is scattered in rural pockets throughout the 110,500 square miles, giving the area 'frontier' status and severely limiting access to many public services.

Due in part to its rapid rate of growth, Nevada has experienced severe economic hardships during the current recession. Since 2008, it has had the largest percentage of foreclosures in the nation, one in every 82 housing units.<sup>3</sup> Unemployment stands at 14.3%, the highest in the nation, following 16 months of job losses in the construction and gaming sectors.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> US Census Bureau available at [Http://www.census.gov/popest/datasets.html](http://www.census.gov/popest/datasets.html)

<sup>2</sup> State of Nevada Official Website: <http://clan.lib.nv.us>

<sup>3</sup> Realty Track: <http://www.realtytrac.com/trendcenter/nv-trend.html>

<sup>4</sup> Nevada Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation

## INTRODUCTION

Nevada Volunteers, a 501c3 nonprofit corporation, serves as the state commission for national and community service. As a commission Nevada Volunteers awards and administers AmeriCorps\*State programming, which currently stands at a record high \$2.4 million. Nevada Volunteers is dedicated to supporting and enhancing volunteer and service experiences that strengthen our local communities.

Nevada has ranked 50<sup>th</sup> (2009) and 51<sup>st</sup> (2008) in the last two national studies on volunteerism by the Corporation for National and Community Service.<sup>5</sup> An average of 20% of Nevada's residents volunteer, as opposed to 26.8% on the national level.

In 2008, Nevada Volunteers implemented several volunteer initiatives aimed at: (1) increasing access to meaningful volunteer opportunities, and (2) strengthening the development of quality volunteer programs. We are working in collaboration with our AmeriCorps and other national service partners and with traditional volunteer programs. Especially important in reaching these goals has been our partnership with the Volunteer Center of Southern Nevada, the only volunteer center in the state, our Strengthening Nevada Through Service AmeriCorpsVISTA project, and special congressionally-directed funding for our work with the higher education campuses.

In Nevada, more than 3,900 people participate in national service each year through 41 national service projects and programs. The Kennedy Serve America Act, which passed Congress and was signed into law in April 2009, created many new opportunities for both national service and the traditional volunteer sector to partner in meeting the needs of our local areas. The Act further required that Nevada Volunteers, in conjunction with its partners, develop a State Service Plan to guide the use of national service resources in creating and reaching strategic objectives for volunteer service in Nevada over the next three years.

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<sup>5</sup> Corporation for National and Community Service.: <http://www.volunteeringinamerica.gov>

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nevadans were invited to participate in the creation of the State Service Plan in one of three ways:

1. Public Forums held in the population bases of Las Vegas (Jan. 27, 2010) and Reno (March 1, 2010), and the rural area of Winnemucca, NV (Feb. 22, 2010)
2. On-line Survey available January – March, 2010
3. Action Research through Personal Interviews

Strategies or approaches for outreach included notices sent to all existing national service programs in partnership with the CNCS State Office; posting of the opportunity on our website; e-blast and press releases; outreach through list-serve and personal contact to our volunteer initiative partners; outreach and consultation with state Aging Services; campus liaisons; and announcement at our annual NOFO technical assistance meetings for AmeriCorps.

Total number of participants at the forums was 84. There were 48 responses to the online survey from nonprofits (68%), government (10%) business (12%) and education (19%).

Each agenda included: Introduction to the Corporation for National and Community Service and Nevada Volunteers; a look back at what had been accomplished since the last State Service Plan three years ago (SSP); an introduction to the Kennedy Serve America Act (SAA); and an engagement process for the participants to discuss volunteer opportunities and help develop policy for improving the State's ability to tackle its biggest problems through service.

A series of key questions were discussed based on priorities in the SAA, the work of the State Service Plan partners, and the strategic plan of the commission.

1. What are the most pressing needs facing your organization that could be addressed through service/volunteerism?
2. What is needed to improve the quality of volunteer/service programs?
3. How can we best direct national service resources to address these needs?
4. What role could Nevada Volunteers best play at a state or regional level?
5. How can we best engage college students?
6. How can we best engage citizens 55+?

Participants tended to identify needs that related to the work they do, i.e. youth-related programs mentioned educational success as a critical need; environmental groups mentioned environmentally- related issues. Overall the areas identified tended to focus on needs of underprivileged children and families, affordable housing and transitional housing, educational success services, food and clothing, mental health services, health and wellness; economic assistance/financial stability, and environmental/energy needs.

As a balance to the limitations of participation bias, we were provided titles of various state needs assessments such as Kids Count, Truckee Meadows Tomorrow Community Assessment, Rural Development Community Assessments, Portrait of Nevada's Seniors, Elder's Count Nevada all of which can be reviewed for a broad perspective of state needs.

With a brief overview of the needs assessments, it seems safe to say that the areas on which we have historically focused remain among the most pressing needs—human services, environmental and energy-related needs, public safety, and education. A new arena was economic stability.

## SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

### 1. *What are the most pressing needs facing your organization?*

- Funding
- Greater public awareness of what we do
- Support with professional services (skilled volunteers)
- Volunteers
  - Long term, committed
  - Qualified—good match

### 2. *How can we best direct national service resources to meet the needs of the state?*

- Member perspective: Support for housing, living on small stipend, certifications at end of service, connections with other members/training specific to member roles.
- Organizational perspective: Continue cultivating partnerships for shared knowledge and information/increased guidance on how to access national service resources.

- Public perspective: A) Anchor program to top state needs rather than to an organization/develop a plan for specific strategies to meet needs; B) More clarity and information about national service.

3. *What is needed to improve the quality of volunteer/service programs?*

- Capacity for volunteer management
  - Developing a continuous improvement model for evaluating the impact and contribution of volunteers (tracking/recording)
  - Establishing recognition and retention strategies
  - Board leadership
- Respectful volunteer engagement/meaningful/ demonstrated impact
- More publicity about program and what we are trying to accomplish
- Outreach to Latino community
- Incentives such as stipends, mileage reimbursement, rewards

4. *What role could Nevada Volunteers best play at a state or regional level?*

- Accessing funds that could be sub granted to local organizations to strengthen volunteer/service programs (65%--highest priority)
- Serving as a referral and information center for volunteerism and service (36%)
- Providing opportunities for training and networking among volunteer leaders (on-line, regional meetings, statewide conferences) (25%)
- Launching a statewide public awareness campaign to encourage more people to volunteer (29%)

5. *How can we best engage college students?*

*Assets:*

- Energy and enthusiasm
- Team focused/idealistic
- Eager to build career skills
- Fresh ideas

*Challenges:*

- Time constraints (semester system/school hours)
- Reliability/accountability
- May need mentor/guidance
- Need high interest activity

6. *How can we best engage Seniors (55+)?*

*Assets:*

- Experience/skills
- Have time to devote to volunteering and service
- Want meaningful work that makes a contribution
- Dedicated/ may want social interaction

*Challenges:*

- Want flexibility to 'take-off'
- Been there, done that
- Mobility/transportation/limitations

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

Based on this stakeholder input and resources available, the following goals were adopted for the three-year period 2010-2013:

### **Goal # 1 – Increase accessibility to national service opportunities that meet critical needs in the state.**

Objective 1: Increase placement of AmeriCorps\*State members in a wider scope of services through the use of intermediaries.

Objective 2: Continue to work with existing sub-grantees, state agencies and community affiliates to develop more AmeriCorps applications annually.

Objective 3: Work closely with CNCS State Office, Learn and Serve, and National AmeriCorps Directs to develop a system of awareness and information sharing regarding applications and programs.

### **Goal #2: Provide opportunities to volunteer leaders to network and improve practice.**

Objective 1: Conduct annual volunteer management training for national service programs.

Objective 2: Provide technical assistance and training to build the capacity of nonprofits and governmental agencies to effectively use volunteers.



Objective 3: Support active use of the Nevada Volunteers website tools including the volunteer matching system, list-serv, resources, and featured stories to connect interested volunteer leaders across the state.

**Goal #3: Serve as a clearinghouse for information on volunteerism and service in Nevada.**

Objective 1: Support collaborative, cross-stream service events with regional partners.

Objective 2: Encourage the use of the Nevada VolunteerMatch system.

Objective 3: Update website content and resources to provide a portal for showcasing volunteer and service across the state.

Objective 4: Utilize the list-serv, e-blasts, newsletters, traditional and social media and media releases to publicize volunteer and service events and accomplishments.

**Goal #4: Provide data regarding service and volunteerism from statewide perspective.**

Objective 1: Prepare an annual Community Report on Volunteering.

Objective 2: AmeriCorps program reporting.

Objective 3: Utilize available data from both national and state levels to heighten awareness and continuous improvement of volunteer participation.

**Goal #5: Increase volunteer initiatives among Nevada's students**

Objective 1: Increase the capacity of community partners to work with college students.

Objective 2: Increase opportunities for increasing student motivation and participation in volunteering and service.

Objective 3: Build effective communication and support systems for interested students/staff and community partners.

**Goal #6: Work collaboratively with existing Senior Corps and other senior organizations to cultivate new volunteer opportunities for citizens over 55.**

Objective 1: Share State Service Plan recommendations with relevant state agencies on engaging Nevadans aged 55+ in volunteering including the inclusion of volunteering in senior health and strategic plans.

Objective 2: Provide technical assistance to encourage an AmeriCorps\*State formula application focusing on Encore service.

Objective 3: Promote skills-based volunteering to match volunteers age 55+ with organizations that seek their expertise.

Objective 4: Promote the understanding of the transferability of the educational award as a multi-generational benefit.

Objective 5: Provide information for AmeriCorps and other national service programs on the benefits and challenges of multi-generational service.

## **State Service Plan for Citizens Aged 55+**

Baby Boomers make up about 27% of Nevada's population.<sup>6</sup> 22.5% of baby boomers in Nevada and 16.5% of Older Adults volunteer in Nevada<sup>7</sup>. Volunteering has been shown to improve overall physical and mental health<sup>8</sup>. In an effort to learn more about the picture of volunteering in Nevada with the population aged 55+, the State Service Plan committee participated in a series of phone calls with Nevada's Senior Corps programs (Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions, RSVP), and met with members of the State Division of Aging, AARP, and the Senior Corps Alliance.

To the question, "How can we best engage citizens 55+?" a sample of responses included:

- Understand their motivation and connect them appropriately [maintain skills/learn new skills/social interests/making a difference/supporting a cause];
- Acknowledge their experience in dealing with people, skill sets, good judgment, patience;
- Respect their physical limitations, disabilities, illness;

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<sup>6</sup> Nevada State Demographer

<sup>7</sup> Volunteering in America/Nevada

<sup>8</sup> Post, Stephen. Why Good Things Happen to Good People; Broadway Books, 2007.

- Provide experiences that provide flexibility and allow for their other commitments and interests;
- Recognize their dedication, dependability, commitment;
- If local, use their connections and knowledge of community resources;
- Be careful of labels like baby boomers, senior—consider inter-generational activities or recruit by skill needed; use the word ‘help’ instead of ‘volunteer’;
- Incentives such as mileage reimbursement, lunch, in-kind donation recognition may be important;
- Consider virtual volunteering options;
- Personal connection with your organization could lead to monetary donations in the future;
- Find ways to make a personal ‘ask’—go to pre-retirement groups, churches, etc.—and emphasize why they are needed;
- Use multiple approaches to recruitment—newspaper, internet, church, civic or social groups—email does not work for some;
- Provide well-organized, responsive volunteer programs with a warm welcome and a thank-you when finished.

Additional insight was provided through interviews with people over age 55 regarding their attitudes and experiences around volunteering. An interesting perspective was that many potential volunteers might want to ‘shop around’ with various organizations before making a definite commitment to one. Providing short term exposure to an organization without making a volunteer feel guilty for not doing more could be an important recruitment tool.

Many over 55s wanted to have an element of social connection to the volunteer experience, either by providing social opportunities for interaction among volunteers or encouraging volunteers to bring others to the organization. Rather than recruiting volunteers by age category, one suggestion was to target volunteers by shared interest—in a particular need area, by shopping preferences, by preferred media outlets, by where people gather.

Recommendations for civic engagement, multigenerational activities, and encouragement of Encore service programs are contained above in Goal #6 concerning the 55+ population in Nevada.





## Office of the Governor

October 20, 2010

Shawn Lecker-Pomaville, CEO  
Nevada Volunteers  
639 Isbell Road, Suite 220  
Reno, NV 89509

Dear Shawn:

We are enclosing the signed Signatory Page of your Nevada Volunteers State Service Plan 2010-2013, indicating that your plan has been approved for the next biennium.

I would, also, like to take a moment to commend your service to the State of Nevada. We are in dire financial straits right now and your volunteers are helping to close the gap between some of the services the state used to provide and is now unable to render. I, personally, am very grateful to all of you.

Please, let us know if we can assist you in anyway, other than the funds I know that you need.


Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jim Gibbons".


Jim Gibbons  
Governor

/dl

Signatory Page



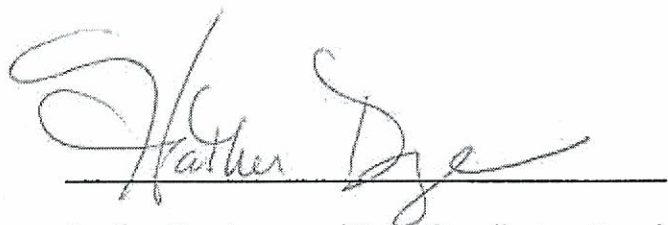
Tiffinay Pagni, Chair, Nevada Volunteers



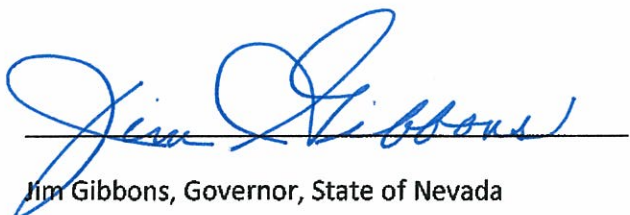
Shawn Lecker-Pomaville, CEO, Nevada Volunteers



Craig Warner, State Director, Corporation for National and Community Service



Heather Dye, Learn and Serve Coordinator, Nevada Department of Education



Jim Gibbons, Governor, State of Nevada