

Nevada Volunteers State Service Plan 2020-2023



nv
nevada
volunteers

Table of Contents

- Acknowledgements 2
- Executive Summary 3
- Methodology 4
- Key Findings 5
 - Organization Profile 5
 - Volunteer Engagement Infrastructure 5
 - AmeriCorps..... 6
 - Community Needs 6
 - Summary 6
- Strategic Goals for 2020-2023..... 6
 - Strengthen and Grow AmeriCorps Nevada Grantmaking7
 - Strengthen and Grow the Service and Volunteer Infrastructure7
 - Strengthen and Grow the Service and Volunteer Recognition7
 - Strengthen and Grow the Organizational Capacity.....7
- Supplemental State Service Plan for Nevadans Age 55 and Older 8
 - Methods..... 8
 - Key Findings..... 8
 - Benefits..... 8
 - People 8
 - Positive Influence 8
 - Plentiful Opportunities..... 9
 - Challenges 9
 - Access to Technology/Technology Issues 9
 - Communication Barriers 9
 - Organizational Capacity Issues 9
- Recommendations10
 - Access to Services10
 - Communication10
 - Outreach10
 - Technology10
- Signatory Page 11

Acknowledgements

Nevada Volunteers would like to thank the graduate students from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (Robin Mendoza, Michelle Brown, Raquel Juarez Cruz, James Fitch, Justin Perry) for their work on these projects. Special thanks to Dr. Jessica Word, who oversaw these projects and provided valuable guidance.

We deeply appreciate everyone who participated in the State Service Plan process. Hundreds of nonprofit leaders took time to respond to a survey and/or participate in interviews. Their voice and feedback essential is to our work. Thank you for partnering with us to help better serve the State.

Thank you to our Commissioners who volunteer their time to ensure that Nevada Volunteers is fulfilling the work needed across the state.

Thank you to Governor Sisolak and his team for their support of national service and volunteerism in Nevada.

Executive Summary

In accordance with federal regulation 45 CFR 2550.80, Nevada Volunteers develops a comprehensive service and volunteer plan to establish organization priorities. This is done every three years and is developed through an open and public process and captures data from a diverse cross section of community organizations in the State. The 2020-2023 State Service Plan and Supplemental State Service Plan for Nevadans Age 55 and up were created in collaboration with graduate students and faculty from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas' (UNLV) School of Public Policy & Leadership.

The studies utilized a mixed-methods approach and captured feedback from a broad and diverse cross section of Nevada. The survey and interview protocol used were developed, administered, and analyzed to better understand the needs and assets of the service and volunteer landscape in Nevada. Findings from the study point towards continued leadership in the grantmaking for AmeriCorps Nevada, a need for improved understanding of the state's volunteer infrastructure in order for the organization to better serve its growth, and opportunities for growth in service and volunteer recognition.

Using the survey data, Nevada Volunteers determined how limited federal and state resources could best be used to support needed program priorities. The result was key objectives that landed in four categories of strengthening and growing 1) AmeriCorps Nevada Grantmaking, 2) service and volunteer infrastructure, 3) service and volunteer recognition, and 4) organizational capacity. The key objectives, activities, and outcomes identified will help Nevada Volunteers better serve the state over the next three-year period.

Methodology

To better understand the service and volunteer landscape in Nevada, Nevada Volunteers partnered with the UNLV School of Public Policy & Leadership to develop and conduct two studies towards the fulfillment of the State Service Plan. The first study was a survey of nonprofit organization designed to understand the barriers, opportunities, and community needs with regards to service and volunteerism. The second study was to understand the unique benefits and challenges in service and volunteering for adults age 55 and older. Complete information regarding the methods and findings of the Supplemental State Service Plan can be found on page 10.

The nonprofit organization survey was developed in partnership with UNLV graduate students and Nevada Volunteers staff. The survey consisted of 42 questions, with several being open-ended for respondent narratives. The survey was emailed to Nevada organizations registered as a 501(c)3, with an operating budget of \$59,999 or more. After accounting for duplicates and returned or failed emails, the total number of recipients was 583.

The survey was open for approximately one month and recipients received weekly reminders. A total of 192 responses were collected (33% response rate) and analyzed by the UNLV graduate students and their professor. A summary of findings along with the data set were sent to Nevada Volunteers for review. From there, the Nevada Volunteers team analyzed the data and determined key objectives to prioritize over the next three years. These key objectives fell into four main categories of work in strengthening and growing 1) AmeriCorps Nevada Grantmaking, 2) service and volunteer infrastructure, 3) service and volunteer recognition, and 4) organizational capacity.

Using this plan as a guide, Nevada Volunteers will be able to better serve the state in the coming years.

Key Findings

Organization Profile

Respondents were representative of the state, with 80% identifying as urban-serving and 20% rural-serving. Most respondents reported having a systematic approach to managing volunteers (71%) and 70+ volunteers (41%). While 65% reported having a dedicated staff member to manage volunteers, very few had a full-time person in this role (see table 1.1). The majority of respondents reported that their organization does not receive federal funding (69%), with several noting barriers due to “red tape” and restrictions, and capacity of the organization.

Table 1.1 Percentage of Time Managing Volunteers

If yes, what percentage of their time is spent managing volunteers?	#	%
Less than 24%	34	25%
25% - 49%	26	19%
50% - 74%	16	12%
75% - 99%	25	19%
100%	13	10%
I Don't Know	20	15%
Grand Total	134	100%

Volunteer Engagement Infrastructure

Several questions were asked to assess the barriers and opportunities for volunteer engagement in the state. Most respondents saw volunteerism as an extremely effective strategy to address community needs (52%). Barriers to utilizing volunteers included finding volunteers with the needed skill set (45%), not enough time to recruit volunteers (40%), not having enough time to manage volunteers (35%), and not enough time to train volunteers (34%). When asked if their organization needs training on volunteer recruitment and/or volunteer management, the responses were mixed with the majority selecting “somewhat agree” or “neither agree or disagree” for both (Table 1.2).

Table 1.2 Volunteer Engagement Training Needs

Our organization needs training on...	volunteer recruitment		volunteer management	
Strongly Agree	26	16%	29	18%
Somewhat Agree	48	29%	49	30%
Neither Agree or Disagree	49	30%	50	30%
Somewhat Disagree	25	15%	19	12%
Strongly Disagree	17	10%	18	11%
Grand Total	165	100%	165	100%

With regards to volunteer recognition, the majority of respondents reported not having a formal recognition program in place (55%). Organizations recognize their volunteers predominately through their internal newsletter or website (59%) and social media and/or news outlets (54%). The top challenges of running a volunteer program were identified as volunteers looking for one-time projects when the organization has a need for ongoing volunteers (48%) and volunteer retention (45%).

From these findings, it is clear the volunteer infrastructure in Nevada needs continued support. Though organizations surveyed said they had a formal volunteer program, they reported challenges around recruitment, retention, and recognition. These challenges are not surprising when considering that very few organizations have a full-time person overseeing their volunteer programs and formalized recognition programs are scarce. The response on organizational training needs was lukewarm, which needs to be explored further to better understand the mixed results.

There are clear opportunities for Nevada Volunteers to support organizations in their volunteer recognition efforts and better understand how to support and strengthen the volunteer infrastructure in the state. During the next three years, Nevada Volunteers will put resources into better understanding the landscape and needs of the volunteer infrastructure to be more responsive in its programming.

AmeriCorps

Feedback on the visibility, need, and interest in AmeriCorps in the state was very positive. The majority of respondents have heard of AmeriCorps (86%) and noted that capacity building and direct service would be most beneficial for their organizations (37% for each). While a majority were interested in AmeriCorps State funds (62%), most could only use 1-3 members engaging in direct service (65%).

AmeriCorps is becoming more recognizable in Nevada; however, it is unclear if organization leaders differentiate between the different streams of National Service. There is an opportunity for continued education, outreach, and cross-stream collaboration to help Nevadans understand the scope of National Service. Though organizations are interested in direct service (AmeriCorps Nevada), they need less than the minimum amount required for an AmeriCorps Nevada grant. These findings echo what Nevada Volunteers has known anecdotally for years: the capacity of organizations is a barrier to accessing AmeriCorps Nevada grants. Thus, working with larger organizations to utilize an intermediary model is a workable solution. Additionally, if Nevada Volunteers had program authority¹ for AmeriCorps Nevada, we would be able to better meet the needs of Nevada organizations, as this would allow us to place one to three members at small organizations and manage the program administration from the commission office.

Community Needs

Respondents were asked to rank the five most critical unmet needs in their communities. Responses fluctuated slightly across regions, but the aggregated responses were ranked as follows: mental health (58%), homelessness (54%), healthcare (access to or lack of) (39%), educational outcomes for students k-12 (39%), and substance abuse (34%).

Understanding the unmet community needs across the state helps guide the targeted outreach of Nevada Volunteers. With this information, we are better able to educate organizations working in these areas on National Service and volunteerism as solutions. As Nevada Volunteers continues to build its organizational capacity, there might be additional ways we can support organizations working on these community needs in the future.

Summary

These findings highlight areas of focus for Nevada Volunteers strategic directions moving forward. More exploratory work needs to be done in understanding the state's volunteer infrastructure in order to better support its growth. There is an opportunity for Nevada Volunteers to take on a stronger role in recognizing service and volunteerism in the state. Based on these findings, Nevada Volunteers should continue efforts in education and outreach regarding AmeriCorps Nevada and National Service. Additionally, there is an opportunity for Nevada Volunteers to build its organizational capacity in order to better serve the state.

Strategic Goals for 2020-2023

After analyzing the data collected, the Nevada Volunteers team identified strategies to address the findings of this survey. These strategies fall into four categories of strengthening and growing 1) AmeriCorps Nevada Grantmaking, 2) Service & Volunteer Infrastructure; 3) Recognition of Service and Volunteerism, and 4) Organizational Capacity. The key objectives for each category are described in the section below.

¹ Per the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1990, Section 119: Commission are listed as Eligible Entities to apply for funds to run an AmeriCorps program.

Strengthen and Grow AmeriCorps Nevada Grantmaking

Nevada Volunteers will continue to administer and manage AmeriCorps Nevada funds in order to meet community-identified needs throughout the state. To this end, Nevada Volunteers will focus on the following key objectives:

1. Reduce risk of the portfolio through activities such as compliance monitoring, guidance, and training.
2. Increase the number of AmeriCorps Nevada programs through program development, outreach, and education.
3. Maintain responsive and inclusive grantmaking through targeted outreach and support.

Strengthen and Grow the Service and Volunteer Infrastructure

As demonstrated by the data collected, volunteerism and national service are effective strategies to meeting community-identified needs. However, data points to a lack of infrastructure for these strategies. To strengthen and grow the service and volunteer infrastructure, Nevada volunteers will focus on the following key objectives:

1. Expand NVVolunteerConnect.org through increased and targeted marketing and outreach, conducting market research to better understand organization needs, and establish baselines to help determine future growth.
2. Establish LeaderCorps through professional development opportunities for members, exploring alumni opportunities, and collaboratively determining activities and outcomes with LeaderCorps members to ensure that we are responsive to state needs.
3. Support National Service in Nevada by strengthening partnerships with other streams of service and increasing cross-stream collaboration.
4. Increase awareness of Nevada Volunteers and local AmeriCorps opportunities through targeted marketing and outreach, strategic partnerships, and education on services.
5. Support volunteer engagement leaders through convening and supporting related professional associations and/or communities of practice (i.e., DOVIA, VOAD) and collaboratively determining additional activities and outcomes.
6. Responsive and inclusive program development through targeted outreach and support of the sector.

Strengthen and Grow the Service and Volunteer Recognition

Recognition of service and volunteerism in Nevada is lacking. Thus, Nevada Volunteers will continue to provide leadership to strengthen and grow recognition of service and volunteerism in the State in the following ways:

1. Grow the Governor's Points of Light Awards by determining barriers for participation, creating targeted marketing and outreach plans, and implementing continual evaluation of the program to ensure we are meeting the needs of the State.
2. Responsive service and volunteer recognition through determining nonprofit recognition needs and boosting the Governor's Certificate Program.
3. Inclusive service and volunteer recognition through targeted outreach and support to underrepresented areas.

Strengthen and Grow the Organizational Capacity

To better serve the State, Nevada Volunteers will focus on strengthening and growing its organizational capacity. To this end, Nevada Volunteers will:

1. Maintain and grow expertise through staff participation in professional development opportunities (conferences, training, etc.) and prioritizing sessions focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion.
2. Improve the organization's capacity to support and reflect Nevada in service and volunteerism through creating a cohesive strategy for the next State Service Plan process and engaging in an iterative review process twice a year.
3. Strengthen volunteer engagement within the organization through targeted commissioner recruitment and continuing to apply Service Enterprise best practices.
4. Refine the organizational identity through determining our brand identity and strategy.
5. Increase the organization's financial stability through strengthening our relationship with the Governor's Office and identifying other funding sources.

Supplemental State Service Plan for Nevadans Age 55 and Older

The idea of volunteerism can mean different things to different people within our communities. According to Nevada RSVP, 4,475 adults aged 55 and contributed to volunteer efforts sponsored by the organization, totaling 35,957 volunteer hours. As part of Nevada's State Service Plan, Nevada Volunteers has created a targeted plan to include the state's commitments to include Nevadans aged 55 and over in service and volunteerism.

A needs assessment of various organizations and stakeholders that provide volunteer opportunities for adults aged 55 and older was conducted in order to provide meaningful information about the benefits and challenges of volunteerism of this population.

Methods

Fifteen qualitative interviews were conducted from key informants/stakeholders in Nevada based on their needs and resources to implement adequate volunteer and service opportunities for adults aged 55 and over. The interviews consisted of questions about their thoughts of needs in the community and the types and levels of services to address those needs. The target interviewees were those in supervisory or managerial roles; through interviewing individuals at this level, more in-depth responses could be recorded. The interviewees were chosen based on jurisdiction so that all varieties of agencies and programs were encompassed.

Key Findings

A majority of the agencies and programs chosen were senior centers, followed by service programs (such as those that act as an information center for certain populations). The mission and values of these agencies and programs mainly focused on health and wellness (i.e., providing free meals and active lifestyle classes), followed by focusing on advocacy and assistance, social change/services, or being a part of a parks & recreation center. A majority of the individuals interviewed for this assessment have been working for their organization/program from more than 10 years; only 33% of the interviewees have been in their position for less than 5 years.

Based on these interviews, the following benefits and challenges have been recorded in order to understand and address the issues affecting volunteerism affecting the 55 and older population:

Benefits

People: A majority of the agencies and programs interviewed stated that their older volunteers are genuinely interested in volunteering and have positive responses to their experience. Many organizations have used the following adjectives to describe their 55 and over volunteers: helpful, kind, loyal, patient, and willing.

"The pros are that seniors who usually volunteer with us have been around for a long time. They are patient, kind, and want to know and serve the community. They are an asset that be helpful. They want to feel like they are a part of something."

Positive Influence: Volunteer opportunities that are provided have given adults aged 55 and over a sense of purpose and ownership, while also providing socialization so that they do not feel alone. Many reported that their volunteers felt like they are a part of something, which gives the organization a sense of purpose in helping this population.

"A lot of our seniors come here alone, so they can come here and make conversations with new people while also enjoying the recreational activities we have to offer. I actually know that one of our seniors actually reunited with one of his old high school friends here, so that's great to renew that relationship they once had at our center."

Plentiful Opportunities: Organizations described the volunteer activities and events that they host are diverse and different – they tend towards this population’s interests, are flexible to their needs, and thought that they engage their volunteers well.

“The benefits are definitely the community and the people. If it weren’t for the people, we wouldn’t have these opportunities. Many non-profit organizations are willing to work with us and provide our 50-plus population plentiful opportunities.”

Challenges

Access to Technology/Technology Issues: A majority of programs and organizations saw that a lack or need of using technology to support their volunteer programs is needed. Many saw that they did not have the funding or knowledge to enact technological change themselves and that adults aged 55 and over would like more educational offerings so that they can better learn to access technology. Many also stated that technology can help their organization become more transparent in outreach initiatives online.

“Technology is becoming an important tool for our members to become aware of and taught how to use. It’s everywhere and there’s no escaping it! I’m always an advocate for more classes to teach seniors how to access technology, whether it be at a local rec or senior center. Because then, once people know how to use this, they can be able to access volunteer resources found online even better.”

Communication Barriers: A main theme seen was that adults aged 55 and over wanted to voice their opinion and make decisions about what they wanted out of the program or center they were attending. Clear communication amongst individuals and staff was a need to better the personal and outreach aspect of services and engagement.

“Two things: fun and communication. Volunteering has to be fun and worth it; communication because our seniors won’t know what’s fun until they know when and where to participate. This keeps them wanting to volunteer and come back to our center. The more opportunities, the better the outcome of volunteer engagement.”

Organizational Capacity Issues: Through improving the following key areas, this can be beneficial for future success of these programs and organizations:

Location of the Center: Many rural organizations saw that they struggled with volunteer retention rates due to where they were located versus more heavily populated organizations/programs.

“The only challenge I have is that we may be inaccessible to some parts of our community, but I hope that our transportation system can help with this.”

Limited Staff: Small staff sizes or the need to recruit more staff members to coordinate volunteer efforts were reported as crucial to address for organizational success.

“Some of the challenges for our center is that we have a very small staff. It’s usually just me and 4 other part-time employees tending to our seniors; we depend on volunteers in our community to help us provide these services.”

Limited Hours: A majority of the agencies interviewed stated that they would like to extend their normal business hours to evening or weekends. Doing so would provide more volunteer opportunities and provide a more flexible schedule for seniors who are only available at these times.

“Extended hours for our center could help benefit those that are working that part time job and can only come in the evening to volunteer, so being open on evening and weekends would be beneficial to our center.”

Transportation: Limited access to transportation was seen as a barrier that some organizations were still trying to figure out; lack of funding for vans and drivers, as well as the physical location of their organization were also correlated to this issue.

“In (rural Nevada), we are spread out from everyone else – we are kind of isolated versus (urban Nevada), so if volunteers want to travel to us, it could take up a two hour drive just to come to the center.”

Funding Opportunities: More funding for volunteer programs and training for staff members were seen as emerging and upcoming needs for programs and organizations.

“We would always love more funding for our current activities and programs. That’s the strongest resource that is needed on our list to get resources we need, such as more computers; a renovated kitchen; repairs for our vans; and more activities for our seniors, such as work out gear and machines.”

Recommendations

Through this needs assessment, the following recommendations have been developed for creating more volunteerism and service opportunities for adults aged 55 and over. These recommendations are below:

Access to Services: Resources need to be available in order for adults aged 55 and over to be active volunteers. Existing and emerging needs such as extended hours, incentives, and transportation can assist this population to be more willing to volunteer and provide service.

Communication: Agencies and stakeholders that serve the 55 and older population need to come together to collaborate on engagement and community connections for all and any resources available for this population.

Outreach: An increase of outreach and awareness is needed for agencies and stakeholders to better expand their transparency and opportunities for the 55 and older population.

Technology: Providing agencies and stakeholder’s access and knowledge about technological advances can be helpful in structuring and accessing opportunities for these programs and organizations.

With the guidance of this plan, we hope to better engage the talents and knowledge of Nevada’s adults aged 55 and over as well as external community members in making a lasting impact throughout the state.

Signatory Page

Scott Emerson, Chair, Nevada Volunteers Commission

Stacey Muse, Executive Director, Nevada Volunteers

Matt Johnson, Director, Corporation National and Community Service State Office

The Honorable Steve Sisolak, Governor, State of Nevada