

## **WASHINGTON STATE SERVICE AND SUSTAINABILITY PLAN 2010-2012**

The Washington Commission for National and Community Service (the Commission) in cooperation with the Washington State Office of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS State Office) jointly sponsored three community outreach meetings to gather comments to develop this Service and Sustainability Plan. In addition, the Commission recently hosted the WA State Service Summit, which helped generate recommendations and suggestions with specific aspects of the plan.

This narrative follows the outline prescribed in the 2010 ADMIN/PDAT/Disability application instructions issued by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). Information provided has been summarized for purposes of this plan, but specific detail can be provided upon request.

### **STRATEGIES OR APPROACHES FOR OUTREACH**

The Commission and CNCS State Office sent notices to all current AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, Learn and Serve, VISTA, and AmeriCorps grantees inviting them to offer comments and to participate in the opportunities to help build the state plan. In addition, the Commission sent via a separate electronic communication, a Notice of Funds Availability to an extensive list of community groups, state wide organizations and faith-based organizations advising them of the opportunities to operate AmeriCorps programs. As part of the outreach process a state-wide conference call and in person bidders conferences were held in eastern and western Washington to provide information on the entire grant process. Additionally, Commission staff members were available to respond to questions via email and phone consultations.

### **PROGRAM FOCUS AREAS WITH PARTNERS AND COLLABORATIONS**

As the Commission continues to support the program focus areas identified by the CNCS, discussions have been launched to support many of the new initiatives identified in the Kennedy Serve America Act. A statewide Veterans Corps (VetCorps) was initiated by the Commission with a 2009 state formula grant awarded to the WA State Department of Veterans Affairs. This VetCorps will have 32 members and will focus on veterans serving other veterans in need. It will additionally have a focus on engaging wounded soldiers at Ft. Lewis in the Warrior Transition battalion on community service projects as a way to enable them to address community needs. The Commission has also worked with the Department of Ecology, WA Conservation Corps to help build a Clean Energy Corps. On-going discussions with various partners are focusing on a Healthy Futures Corps, Opportunity Corps, and Education Corps.

## **SPECIAL INITIATIVES TO COLLABORATE WITH VARIOUS NATIONAL SERVICE PROGRAMS AND PARTNERS**

In addition to the collaborative work, partnering with the CNCS State Office, the Commission and various statewide partners hosted the first WA State Service Summit at the University of Washington on September 9, 2009. The Summit, in partnerships with the King County United Way, the Volunteer Centers of Washington, Campus Compact, Learn and Serve, Senior Corps, and VISTA, enabled many organizations to see a preview of what the Kennedy Serve America Act could help support in the coming years. Over 400 national service and volunteer leaders gathered for the Summit. As a result, the opportunities to serve and volunteer are now more visible for visitors to state agency web sites, partnerships to support service and new partnerships have been formed to move this effort forward. The Summit also positioned the state to work with private funders to help support initiatives that can be supported with the Social Innovation Fund and Volunteer Generation Fund, both new initiatives in the Serve America Act.

## **NON-MONETARY SUPPORT CNCS CAN OFFER TO ENSURE THE SUCCESS OF THE PLAN**

Many of the comments received at the three community meetings were addressed in support for engaging more individuals 55 and over in national service. While some of the policy changes raised will ultimately require additional Congressional funding, we list them here as they directly relate to ways to enable more individuals 55 and over to serve:

- Expand the VISTA health insurance coverage so it will cover pre existing conditions for people 55 and over
- Significantly raise the FGP stipend so it aligns with the minimum AmeriCorps living allowance
- Expand the number of RSVP programs nationwide
- Enable RSVP to receive credit for recruiting volunteers under 55 if they are part of a family or extended family of volunteers
- Develop a national promotional campaign that publicizes the transferability of the AmeriCorps Educational Award to a grandchild, child, or foster child
- Create alternative application processes for VISTA suited for individuals without access to a computer or high speed internet capability
- Offer skill based volunteer training to grantees that are focused on placing individuals over 55 with specific skills with agencies needing those skill sets
- Plan and develop compatible electronic grants management systems with functionality that permits data transfer from CNCS systems to State/local grantee electronic grants management systems
- Promote programs such as Encore Fellows to engage individuals 55 and over with high-level skills
- With ever-increasing attention to designated days of service, it is critical that the CNCS identify the days that will be prioritized for the year

## **PLAN FOR SERVICE BY ADULTS AGE 55 OR OLDER**

Policy suggestions were received at the three community meetings convened throughout the state. The following recommendations received a majority of support at these sessions:

- Enable individuals receiving unemployment compensation to continue receiving assistance while they volunteer their skills to benefit the community
- Allow people receiving unemployment compensation to count volunteer hours (minimum 10 hours/week) as one of their employment contacts for each week
- Develop options for individuals serving in AmeriCorps so members can continue to receive unemployment compensation especially in area labor markets where there are minimal opportunities to return to similar skilled positions
- Create opportunities where national service programs can meet with employees nearing retirement, or in companies being “downsized” and offer volunteer options that they can explore while still working
- Make it easier for individuals who are working to serve in part time national service positions prior to retirement
- Promote opportunities for national service programs to offer information on business and labor internal intranet sites that are restricted to employees
- Publicize the value of utilizing individual interests of volunteers for the good of all
- Utilize the strong social networks of members 55 and over as sources of recruitment and public outreach on service opportunities
- Develop an Education Award alternative so individuals can devote the equivalent of their education award to a health care or retirement account
- Support the development and capability of volunteer centers to have the staff capacity to make matches of specialty skilled based volunteers with the organizations needing those skills

### **Recommendations to State Agency on Aging on Marketing Outreach to Business and Education**

Some of the previous recommendations and findings also apply to this section of the plan. Specifically the recommendations to business are as follows:

- Support the ability of individuals who are receiving unemployment insurance to acquire new skills and work references while they volunteer and address critical community needs
- In areas of high unemployment where there is minimal opportunity to return to skilled based positions, enable individuals receiving unemployment compensation to serve as AmeriCorps members as a way to increase their work skills
- Offer skill based volunteer sabbaticals to employees approaching retirement age so they can sample various volunteer opportunities in the community so they have a more specific idea of the type of volunteer service they will elect to do upon retirement
- Enable employees to work part time and volunteer as a way to ease the total loss of work opportunities
- Promote the benefits of volunteering and national service to individuals 55 and over

- Encourage individuals 55 and over to serve as mentors to support students and school districts to enrich Culminating Projects with service-learning
- Provide classes and courses that help community agencies serve skill based volunteers over 55 who are searching for an opportunity to match their skills to an organization needing those skills

### **Recommendations for Civic Engagement and Multigenerational Activities**

Many of the recommendations offered in previous sections of the plan also apply to this section. Some of the changes in the Kennedy Serve America Act will enable additional individuals over 55 to serve in national service. Specific recommendations are as follows:

- Expand the understanding of the transferability of the educational award with a focus on individuals 55 and over
- Publicize the campuses that match the education award
- Utilize a best practice approach to model service activities people over 55 can address
- Promote and encourage Senior Corps programs to connect applicants 55 and over to an appropriate AmeriCorps opportunity, if they want to serve in a full time capacity to earn an educational award for a child
- Conduct local skill based volunteer training for AmeriCorps programs who recruit individuals who serve as mentors and tutors for youth and young adults
- Promote the capacity for both service-learning and volunteerism through cross-streams of service
- Offer training opportunities on skill based volunteering to companies for employees who are considering retirement

### **Recommendations for Encouraging Encore Service Programs**

Many AmeriCorps programs in the state actively recruit individuals 55 and over. These individuals have proved to be invaluable in recruiting other volunteers with skills needed to address specific needs in the community. They have also been able to recruit other individuals 55 and over for projects that need specific skills. Specific recommendations are as follows:

- Expand volunteer center opportunities to ensure statewide coverage for the state to assist people over 55 with potential volunteer assignments
- Offer specific training to volunteer center staff to assist people 55 and over to find the type of volunteer position that best suits their needs
- Recruit individuals 55 and over to serve as mentors to new volunteers
- Market Encore opportunities to members with specific skill sets needed to take on a significant project

## **SUSTAINABILITY OF NATIONAL SERVICE EFFORTS**

National service efforts in the state of Washington have received bi-partisan political support for close to forty years. The state government hosted many VISTA Volunteers in the late 1960's and early 1970's, the University Year in Action, and the Program for Local Service. In 1983, the state legislature created the WA Service Corps and the WA Conservation Corps, which still exist as AmeriCorps grantees. In 1999, the legislature created the WA Reading Corps and that effort continues to be funded by the legislature. The legislature also continues to provide financial support through the Department of Commerce to support RSVP. Legislative funding provides support for the operations of the WA Commission for National and Community Service, which also receives state in-kind support.

This year the Commission received funding from The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to provide the match support for a variety of needy projects funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. As part of that grant, the Commission received support to help host the WA State Service Summit at the University of Washington on September 9, 2009. Other partners included The Boeing Company, Seattle Works, United Way of King County, and the Volunteer Centers of Washington.

Building upon the success and recommendations of the Summit, the Commission will begin to plan for a follow up meeting with area grant makers to help vision how locally pooled resources can leverage funding from the CNCS administered Social Innovation Fund and the Volunteer Generation Fund. Staff will be working on a variety of efforts to help position Washington as a strong funding base that can support a variety of innovative efforts that utilize service as a strategy to support community improvement.