

## AmeriCorps State Planning Grants



Volunteer Iowa has announced a Request for Applications for Iowa AmeriCorps State planning grants for program year 2023-2024. Submission of the required Pre-Application for Planning Grants is due no later than February 7, 2023. Check the [AmeriCorps State grants page on the Volunteer Iowa website](#) for the full timeline and application details.

Iowa AmeriCorps State is a national service program that involves individuals ("members") providing service to address critical needs in their communities. AmeriCorps members also mobilize community volunteers and strengthen the capacity of the organizations they serve. In exchange for a term of service, members typically receive a living allowance and other benefits from the sponsor organization while serving. Upon successful completion of their service, members earn an education award to help pay for education costs at qualified institutions of higher education, or to pay for educational training, or to repay qualified student loans. Individuals may serve in AmeriCorps from age 17 and up.

AmeriCorps State planning grants do not provide AmeriCorps member funding but instead provide organizations with funds to pay for the staff/consultant time needed to develop plans for and prepare to launch an AmeriCorps program.

Iowa AmeriCorps State engages the energy and idealism of the citizens of Iowa in meeting the most vital education, economic opportunity, health, environmental, disaster preparedness, public safety, and veterans' needs in our communities. Iowa's AmeriCorps State portfolio currently consists of over 20 programs with more than 800 members serving in full- or part-time positions. These programs operate throughout the state to address critical community needs.

Contact [Jamie Orozco-Nagele](#) with questions about the AmeriCorps State Planning Grants.

## Volunteer Reception Center Train the Trainer

Volunteer Iowa will be hosting a FREE Volunteer Reception Center Train the Trainer on February 10th, 2023, from 9:30am-3:30pm in Des Moines. [Register today](#) to participate in this training.

When disaster strikes, unaffiliated/spontaneous volunteers who want to help will often travel from all over the country to assist their neighbors, friends, and even complete strangers. Without adequate planning and thoughtful care on the utilization of volunteer resources, this could lead to a stress on local infrastructure and resources, or even worse, injuries. This training will prepare you to conduct a Volunteer Reception Center training in your community. Presenter Chad Driscoll, Training & Technical Assistance Manager with America's Service Commissions, will walk through the crucial elements of training your community to make and implement a plan for coordinating spontaneous volunteers in times of disaster. Intended audience includes Volunteer Centers, RSVP Programs, Emergency Managers, those tasked with managing volunteers in county emergency plans, IDHRC members, and local COAD members. For questions or more information, please reach out to Volunteer Iowa's Disaster Program Officer [Michael Rojas](#).

## Give Back Iowa Challenge

The 9th Annual [Give Back Iowa Challenge](#)

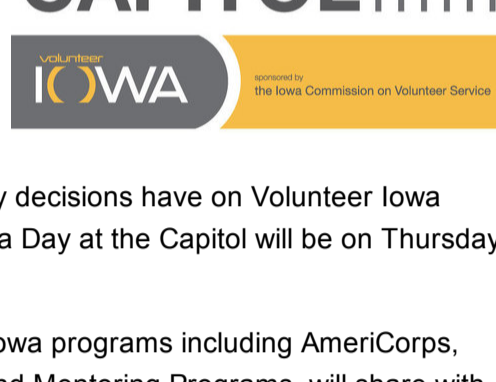
registration is now open! Now is the time to begin planning for the two-month challenge. The Give Back Iowa Challenge is an eight-week statewide challenge, which serves as a competitive way to encourage organizations and businesses alike to participate in community volunteering. The Challenge runs from April 1st through May 31st. It's simple; [register your organization](#), track the hours of your employees, record those hours on our system, and celebrate your employees and their dedication to volunteerism!

There are a variety of ways to help out in your community. There are many volunteer opportunities statewide, including youth mentoring, college and career mentoring, assisting food banks and food pantries with packaging and distribution, skills-based opportunities, and more. Search our [statewide volunteer database](#) for volunteer opportunities in your area.

Visit the [Give Back Iowa Challenge website](#) to learn more about this year's challenge. Contact [Betsy Shelton](#) with questions.

## Volunteer Iowa Day at the Capitol

Volunteer Iowa and Iowa MENTOR host Volunteer Iowa Day at the Capitol each year to share with legislators the latest information on the tremendous contributions volunteers and mentors make and their impact in Iowa's communities. It is also an opportunity to educate lawmakers about the impacts their policy decisions have on Volunteer Iowa programs and services. This year, Volunteer Iowa Day at the Capitol will be on Thursday, February 2.

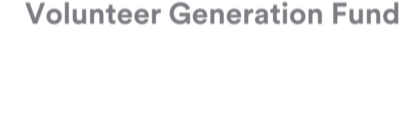


Staff members and participants from Volunteer Iowa programs including AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps Seniors, RSVP, Volunteer Centers and Mentoring Programs, will share with lawmakers the impact their programs have across the state and will inform them about the tremendous program support and resources provided to them by Volunteer Iowa and Iowa MENTOR. Commissioners and programs of Volunteer Iowa are invited to take part in this annual event to help us:

- Highlight the importance of service volunteering in Iowa
- Build legislators' awareness of policy issues important for expanding our sector
- Provide a venue for volunteer and national service programs to connect with their local legislators

The Volunteer Iowa staff creates a [handbook](#) each year that can help attendees navigate through the process to prep for the day, reach out to legislators, and help with social media the day of the event. For more information, contact [info@volunteeriowa.org](mailto:info@volunteeriowa.org) or 800.308.5987. [Register today to join us](#) for Volunteer Iowa Day at the Capitol!

## New School Funding Opportunity for Service-Learning & Mentoring Programs



Volunteer Generation Fund

Volunteer Iowa is excited to announce two new funding opportunities for schools to support service-learning and mentoring programs. Applicants will be selected to receive funding to launch school-based mentoring programs or service-learning at their school. Applications will be opening this March. Contact [Kamryn Ryan](#) to be notified when the service-learning funding is released and [Mary Sheka](#) to be notified when the mentoring funding is released.

## Service Enterprise Spring Cohort Applications Now Being Accepted



A national program led statewide by Volunteer Iowa, Service Enterprise is a proven, research-based model that equips organizations to leverage volunteers and their skills across all levels to successfully deliver on their social mission.

Through a multi-month virtual engagement with Volunteer Iowa, organizations will move through a change management process with innovative training and consulting support, that will result in embracing volunteers into their core operations and greater impact.

An organization will receive:

- A thorough research-based assessment of existing organizational capacity and volunteer engagement practices
- Up to 16 hours of training on change management and reexamining the ways in which the organization engages volunteers
- Individualized consulting to address unique organizational opportunities and challenges
- National certification signifying the organization's commitment to and proficiency in appropriately leveraging the time and skills of volunteers to meet the social mission of the organization.

Visit [Volunteer Iowa's Service Enterprise webpage](#) for more information. Applications are due February 6th and can be requested by emailing [Michelle Raymer](mailto:Michelle.Raymer).

## An Announcement from Volunteer Iowa

During Governor Reynolds' Condition of the State address to the General Assembly, she announced an effort to improve how state government serves Iowans by aligning executive branch departments differently and streamlining operations.

Over the last several months, we've been working with the Governor's team, along with leaders from every department, to identify where opportunities exist to work more efficiently and effectively together. As a result, the Governor will be introducing a bill that proposes changes to how state government is structured and how it functions. It will include the recommendation that Volunteer Iowa will be housed at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

*The Benefit of Volunteer Iowa Aligning with the Department of Health and Human Services*

Placing Volunteer Iowa with HHS will increase our connection to the needs of nonprofits, community support providers and the social services programs run by HHS. Volunteer Iowa already has collaborative relationships with both Aging and HHS as they partner to support RSVP and the RISE AmeriCorps program, as well as Department of Public Health with mentoring and the Department of Human Rights with service learning. The new HHS will house all of these entities together. By strategically aligning departments in a new organizational structure and leveraging our combined expertise, resources and funding, we have an opportunity to elevate our services and improve outcomes for more Iowans.

This repositioning of Volunteer Iowa will not result in a cut to programs or services. While some areas may soon look or function differently than they do now, I can assure you that Volunteer Iowa will maintain its existing programs and community partnerships. We still have a lot to do in discussing particulars and negotiating the relationship with the commission, but that will begin in earnest with HHS in the coming weeks and months.

I want to thank you for what you do every day to serve Iowans and empower Iowans to serve. You are making a difference in people's lives and making Iowa and our communities better every day. As we move forward, we have been assured that the goal is to enhance our ability to do just that, without breaking anything in the process. Our staff and your commitment to service is the most important ingredient to our success and I am committed to make sure this transition is as smooth as possible and our efforts to engage Iowans in service to meet our areas of greatest need are enhanced.

I expect this will raise questions for many of our programs and partners. Your questions and feedback are important, and we want to hear from you. Please contact your program officer or me directly with any questions and we will do our best to address them as we are able.

Sincerely,

Adam Lounsbury  
Executive Director, Volunteer Iowa

## Service in the News

- [A Bloody Beautiful October](#)
- [AmeriCorps planning grants open](#)
- [Green Iowa AmeriCorps volunteers help feed homeless on MLK Day](#)
- [Tax preparation help available through Retired Senior Volunteer Program](#)
- [Amal Barre is named Graduate Fellow in Housing Justice](#) (Habitat for Humanity of Iowa AmeriCorps Alum)
- [Pekin third-graders to become pen pals with senior volunteers](#)
- [Building Bridges to Energy Sector Careers through Service Years](#) (featuring Green Iowa AmeriCorps alum Cameron Mannina)
- [Big Brothers, Big Sisters celebrates 50 years mentoring local kids](#)
- [Club M mentoring program helping guide next generation of grayhounds](#)
- [Big Brothers Big Sisters of Siouxland hosting National Mentoring Month event at Cone Park](#)
- [Celebrate National Mentoring Month with Helping Services for Youth & Families this coming January](#)
- [Community Center Hosts Big Brothers Big Sisters of Johnson County 30 Brothers in 30 Days Campaign](#)

## Current Volunteer Iowa Opportunities

Volunteer with us! Volunteer Iowa is always on the lookout for individuals who want to give back and help support our work. Find [general volunteer opportunities with Volunteer Iowa](#). We currently have one position open with immediate need:

- Volunteer Iowa seeks a detail-oriented volunteer to assist with improvements to the statewide [Get Connected](#) database. This database provides the ability for individuals and groups across the state to find and register for meaningful volunteer opportunities and improves the ability for nonprofits and organizations who are in need of volunteer assistance to have those needs met. The volunteer will ensure the information contained in the database is up-to-date, create resources to ensure usability of the site, and develop a promotion plan to reach organizations and individuals who could benefit from the service. This opportunity can be completed virtually and scheduled at the volunteer's discretion. [Learn more and sign up](#) today.

Join the ranks of other AmeriCorps VISTA members serving in organizations across the state helping to alleviate poverty. AmeriCorps VISTA provides opportunities for Americans eighteen years of age and older from diverse backgrounds to dedicate a year of service with non-profit organizations or public entities (as a host organization) to create or to expand efforts designed to empower low-income individuals and communities. VISTA members serve for one year in full time position with a host organization. More information about joining VISTA and a current list of AmeriCorps VISTA opening in Iowa can be found on our [AmeriCorps VISTA page](#).

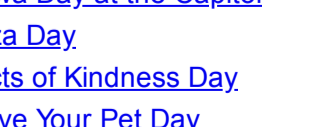
Other [Iowa AmeriCorps programs](#) supported by Volunteer Iowa are also recruiting now.

## Important Dates

- February: [Black History Month](#)
- February 2: [Volunteer Pizza Day at the Capitol](#)
- February 9: [National Pizza Day](#)
- February 17: [Random Acts of Kindness Day](#)
- February 20: [National Love Your Pet Day](#)
- February 21: [National Pancake Day](#)
- March 2: [National Read Across America Day](#)
- March 8: [International Women's Day](#)
- March 12-18: [AmeriCorps Week](#)
- March 20: [Won't You Be My Neighbor Day](#)
- March 21: [National Agriculture Day](#)
- March 30: [National Take a Walk in the Park Day](#)

Looking for a way to give back? Visit [Get Connected](#) today to find volunteer opportunities. Organizations can [post volunteer opportunities](#) on Get Connected as well at no cost.

Get Connected!



Volunteer Iowa  
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