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## **Results of Nebraska's Voices for Volunteerism: A 6-City Listening Tour October 2010**

In June and July of 2010, ServeNebraska – the Nebraska Volunteer Service Commission hosted a 6-city listening tour, "Nebraska Voices for Volunteerism." The listening tour provided an opportunity for community stakeholders to share their thoughts on how to expand service and volunteerism to help address our state's biggest challenges such as: hunger, homelessness, unemployment, illiteracy, high school dropouts, health issues, returning veterans' needs and the environment.

Tour stops included:

- Gering/Scottsbluff
- North Platte
- Kearney
- Columbus
- Lincoln
- Omaha

People who attended the 6-city listening tour represented the following groups: K-12 schools; aging networks; colleges/universities; faith-based organizations; nonprofit agencies; public safety; community based organizations; community leaders; businesses; healthcare; elected officials; concerned citizens; foundations; corporations; service organizations; state government; media and national service (AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, Learn and Serve, VISTA).

Nearly 130 people lent their diverse voices and thoughts to discussions that centered around community challenges and how volunteerism and national service programs can be expanded and utilized more effectively to improve the quality of life for citizens in these and other communities throughout Nebraska.

ServeNebraska has been tasked with developing a State Service Plan aimed at utilizing service as a strategy to guide Nebraska during these difficult economic times. The valuable community input gathered from the listening tour will prepare ServeNebraska and its service partners for this task as it has ensured a diverse group of voices were heard and key issues have been identified and will be addressed in the plan.

Listening Tour participants were asked a series of questions related to communities, volunteerism, resources, capacity, national service, and impact. The common themes that emerged from the community discussions are described

## Background

On April 21, 2009, the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act was signed by the President. The Serve America Act reauthorized and expands national service programs administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service by amending the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (NCSA) and the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 (DVSA). This extraordinary new legislation to support national service and volunteerism has had a huge impact on ServeNebraska and included a requirement for each to provide a plan to expand services to meet the Serve America Act opportunities, a State Service Plan.

Some of the ways the Act may impact Nebraskans include:

- A new Summer of Service program for young people.
- Increases for AmeriCorps from 75,000 positions to 250,000 by 2017 [At our 2009 level of AmeriCorps members, Nebraska's projected share of 250,000 is 450 (.0018%)].
- Improving service options for experienced Americans and permits individuals age 55 and older to transfer their education award to a child or grandchild.
- Increases in federal and state support for State Commissions.

## Purpose of State Service Plan Listening Tour

The general purpose of the Listening Tour is to help gather information in an open process to:

- a. develop a state service plan that addresses the components of the 2009 Serve America Act,
- b. measure the needs of local communities in the state, and
- c. discover ways volunteers and national service can help meet some of those needs.

First, input was expected to vary and encompass a wide variety of need areas that could possibly be categorized and organized along common themes. Secondly, some of those needs would be built into the Commission's new five-year strategic plan and state service plan to be created in October 2010.

## Framework and Process

In fall 2009, the Commission conducted an online survey to gather information about persons age 55+ and began to plan the redesign of a new three-year State Service Plan. The scope of the public input process was reviewed with Commissioners in January 2010. Research was conducted on the successes of other Commissions to garner advice and use best practices in implementing a process. Process development began on the Listening Tour prior to the April 2010 Commission meeting with guidance from commissioners. Participants were invited to attend community forums in six Nebraska cities and asked questions about critical issues in their communities in the six federal priority areas of education, health, environment, economic challenges and veterans. Viewing service as a strategy to meet local Nebraska needs and expanding service opportunities to those over 55 yrs were also included in the forum discussions.

The Commission collaborated with commissioners, local national service partners and other groups to find locations, arrange for meeting rooms and to publicize the forums to maximum publicity and generate good attendance at each of the community forums. Publicity outreach was a partnership with local partners and the Commission to better reach the local newspaper and broadcast media. Partners included: *CNCS State Office, Senior Corps Programs (RSVP, FGP, SCP), Volunteer Centers, United Ways, CAP Agencies, K-12 Learn and Serve Programs, AmeriCorps Programs, VISTA members, Local Health Departments, Foundations, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, corporate volunteer managers, local government and veteran's organizations.*

Although this report reflects a snapshot of community needs as identified and expressed in summer 2010, these findings are convincing and well-founded with implications for action. The needs expressed by the public will help inform the work of the ServeNebraska Commission in developing a State Service Plan and, possibly, directing resources in response to these priority needs. As with all efforts to gather public input and assess local needs, the inherent limitations of staff, time, budget, geographic scope and representation, particularly in rural and frontier areas of the state, were present in the 2010 Listening Tour initiative.

The large numbers of persons registering for the Listening Tour forums, and attending, was much more than preliminary estimates and unexpected. A total of 135 persons pre-registered for the forums with 126 attending. In addition more than two dozen additional persons shared their input through the Online Survey that was available to the public through August 31, 2010.

This summary is about community “needs” as identified by the attendees in their respective locations. All areas of Nebraska have encountered difficult times yet are finding ways to work through the hard times through resourcefulness and hard work. While reading through the themes and specific needs for each forum location (in Appendix A), we cannot lose sight of the fact that all communities possess many positive aspects not covered in this report. Of particular note is the strong support for Senior Corps programs in the communities where they have a presence.

## **Common Themes**

Almost all communities identified a wide variety of similar needs. Those are included here as Common Themes. While communities want help from the “outside,” most reported that the kind of support they want is the provision of resources (and even change in rules/regulations) so that they can take care of their issues themselves. Supports needed to help them move farther down the track toward expanded service and volunteerism to help with some of the need areas hadn’t been considered as a solution very often in the past and was a new area to focus on.

The feedback from attendees at each of the six cities’ forums is included in detail in Appendix A. The input varies widely in specific issues but can be combined into general categories such as youth & persons age 55+, education & literacy, economic challenges, health & special needs, transportation, new population groups & language roadblocks, the environment and veterans. Neighborhood violence was an area of importance in the metro Omaha area, perhaps slightly in the Lincoln area, but was not as large a concern in the remaining rural and frontier communities in Nebraska. Education and youth appeared to be a major focus area in all forums.

The following themes are offered with sample needs listed under each. These community needs were taken from the Listening Tour feedback from all cities:

### **Schools/Education**

- Teacher shortages; teachers don’t want to relocate to towns of less than 1,000-5,000
- After school programs; latchkey children/no child care available (especially for 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> shifts)
- Family involvement in schools

### **Travel/Transportation**

- Travel time in rural NE; 2-3 hours; limited or no public transportation/limited drivers
- Concerns for medical emergencies when community is not served with an ambulance/rural EMTs are volunteers; limited numbers available; have limited availability during the day; first responders are aging out/shortage of doctors, dentists

### **Environment**

- Recycling not feasible in rural areas because of large fees to transport/no infrastructure for recycling
- Large feedlots and confinement areas are detrimental to air & water quality; issue not addressed by State elected leaders since this area is seen as helpful to state economy; people’s health is at risk
- Alternative sources of energy needed/weatherization of older homes (most of those in small towns/villages)

### **Elderly Living/Medical Needs**

- Need more volunteers especially at nursing home
- In rural areas same people volunteer for everything and get burned out; need clerical volunteers

### **Volunteer Opportunities**

- 55+ want one-time volunteer opportunities/desire to apply professional skills
- Youth want opportunity to develop professional skills/experience without having to go to college
- Counter perception that service learning is “forced volunteerism”; teach youth what volunteering is
- Link intergenerational groups to help each other; engage elderly who have strong work ethic; mentor youth who don’t understand what a work ethic is; engage youth to help elderly understand high tech world

### **Rural Life Not Understood by Elected Officials/Metro Populations**

- Lack of understanding of rural areas in Washington and in Lincoln/Omaha; some rules & regs as written don’t apply to life in the rural, less populated areas/ok to have rules & regs but they should actually have some reality for rural resources or lack thereof, e.g., some communities don’t have access to high speed internet and few people own computers; rural broadband not available/no access to Skype or Internet

## **Veterans**

- Veterans are not informed of where to go for service, e.g. the county veterans' offices; major services only available in Omaha or Sioux Falls, SD – hundreds of miles away; substandard housing in rural areas; growing population; concern about homeless veterans
- Two-year wait list for wheelchair users for limited housing in rural communities

## **Youth Development - Capability to Live Independently**

- Teen pregnancy and parenting skills for teens
- Parenting skills training for parents in 20's and 30's
- Survival education/life skills
- Too many homeless youth under 21; more job opportunities
- Foster care kids are aging out and have no living skills to live independently leading to homelessness, crime and pregnancy

## **Nebraska's Mental Health Issues**

- Nebraska has not solved the huge mental illness/mental health issues that have been plaguing communities for the last few years

## **New Populations/Cultural & Language Issues**

- Cultural & trust issues; minority cultures resist assistance; don't know how to access services; lack of understanding by both sides of cultural; social differences; language barriers/lack of interpreters (different than translators); fear of government; integration of new populations
- Multicultural separation; growth of gangs/limited or no services to other cultures: Latino, Nigerian, Somali
- Underserved populations; adult education/GED; market social services; lack of affordable, decent housing

## **Aging Professionals Leave Small Towns**

- Business succession planning/training needed in very small towns where professionals are aging out and new people are not coming to the towns, e.g. lawyers, accountants

## **Economic Realities**

- Increased number of working poor
- Financial access to meds or food – huge dilemma for older adults with few resources; challenges for aged population to stay in their homes in rural areas/no supports or family around to help; social isolation
- Affordable family activities in summer

## **Loss Sense of Community/Commutes for Work and Services**

- Deteriorating sense of community
- Many commute long distances for work and services; jobs don't pay a living wage; businesses are not hiring/schools laying off paraeducators; United Way didn't meet fundraising goal (rural southwest Nebr)

## **Ex-Offender Re-entry**

- Programs hard to find; programs for children of parent in prison
- Education and employment are critical gaps

## **Gangs/Violence**

- Helping youth obtain and maintain employment; more afterschool programs; 1:1 mentoring
- More adults need to get involved with youth activities to learn what their needs are
- Avoid stereotyping youth

# **APPENDIX A**

## ***Feedback from Listening Tour Cities***



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## **Listening Tour Feedback** **Columbus, NE – July 6, 2010**

**14 Participants**  
**1 Commissioner**  
**2 Staff**

### **Teacher Shortage**

Students have increased needs  
Fewer resources  
Positive effect of foster grandparents in classroom

### **Integration of New Populations**

Schools- more English as a Second Language students  
Medical – language issues/interpreters  
Community involvement – limited involvement in children's education  
Gangs – primarily Latino  
Groups include Latino, Sudanese, Myanmar  
Wayne State students helping with Spanish speaking populations

### **Involvement of Skilled Professionals Sharing Expertise**

Challenges facing felons in hiring due to increased background checks

### **After/Out of School Programming**

Volunteer availability  
Latchkey children  
No child care in schools  
No provider to partner  
Church involvement in some communities, not in others

### **Childcare**

Availability – especially for 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> shift workers  
Affordability  
Quality

### **Family Involvement in Schools** – more, especially from Hispanic community

### **Travel Time for Services in Rural Nebraska**

2-3 hours  
Online services not a viable option for many seniors  
Limited public transportation between communities  
Limited availability of volunteer drivers  
Liability an issue  
Health care concerns especially with emergencies

### **Lack of Awareness of Eligibility by Many who Qualify for Benefits**

Challenges in identifying and quantifying need  
Many will not complete forms to avoid stigma of being poor in small communities  
Offer for all to target to “disadvantaged”

### **Volunteers**

Positive role of Connect Columbus Volunteer Center (program of United Way)

### **Environment**

Fee charged for recycling to cover transportation costs in small communities (Pender)  
Use of recycled tires – sprinkled on landfill, not ground and re-used  
No infrastructure for recycling

### **Volunteering**

Liability issues  
    Awareness/training of issues  
    When is a background check needed?  
Engaging 55+  
    Desire for one-time opportunities  
    Immediate gratification  
    Desire to apply their professional skills  
Engaging youth  
    Youth want opportunities to develop professional skills and experience

### **Increased Number of Working Poor**

Increased need  
Need more volunteers  
Backpack program (Hastings)  
Summer food program (Columbus)

### **Health**

Rural EMTs are volunteers and have limited availability during the day

### **Rules and Regulations**

Drafted in Washington D.C.  
Lack of understanding/applicability to rural areas

### **Veterans**

Distance/access issues with services in Omaha and Sioux Falls  
Lack of awareness among veterans of services provided by county veterans' offices  
Idea: promote veterans' offices as part of creating monuments

### **Ombudsman for Nursing Homes (Area Agency on Aging)**

Need for more volunteers  
Do try to recruit at senior centers  
Possibilities: RSVP and/or Experience Works  
Need for clerical volunteers



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## Listening Tour Feedback

### Kearney, NE - June 24, 2010

**22 Participants**  
**2 Commissioners**  
**2 Staff**

#### Youth

- Teen pregnancy and parenting skills
- Mentoring programs – Teammates
  - Big Brothers/Big Sisters (Grand Island)
- Parenting skills/parenting education
  - Program in schools (Grand Island and Kearney)
- Teen dropouts (school)
- Homeless – under 21
- Foster Care – aging out of system and not having living skills to live independently
  - Leads to homelessness, crime, and pregnancy as a way to survive & belong
- “Throw Away” kids
- Workforce Investment Act/Vocational Rehabilitation
  - Youth component (national) up to 24 years
- Crossroads Program
- Teen Net program (Kearney)
- Substance abuse issues
- Mental health/behavioral health services
  - Shortage of psychiatrists/mental health providers
  - Closing of Regional Center
  - Community based services
  - Law enforcement training
    - Lack of expertise for handling situations
  - Medicaid rules/regulations
  - Funding/geography
- After school programs (Kearney)
  - Use sliding scale
- Cultural/trust issues
  - Resistance to assistance
  - Knowing how to access services
  - Lack of understanding on both sides re: cultural/social differences
- Multicultural separation
  - Lack of trust among different cultures
  - Growth of gangs in different ethnic groups
  - Unable to provide services to other cultures: Latino, Nigerian, Somali, etc.
- Not enough youth activities that are affordable
- Boys-n-Girls Club
- Girl Scouts

- Lack of after school programs in smaller, rural areas
- Sexuality – too young
- Communication gap
  - Don't have neutral areas to meet
  - Lexington has made some progress
- AmeriCorps
  - Help teachers with curriculum
  - Provide expertise
- Social gathering – Help partner schools with parents of students
- Student led initiative/Slang
  - More respectful
- Leadership classes
- Losing their youth
  - No opportunities
  - Community is too small
  - Little economic development
  - Need for jobs for young adults
- Apprenticeships
  - Develop skill sets – trade school
  - Not well known
- Business succession planning /entrepreneurship
- Rural development districts – provide training for succession planning
- Get volunteer opportunities out there and known
- Community service requirements at schools
  - Need to counter perception that service learning is “forced volunteerism”
  - Minnesota and Wisconsin have good programs for K-12 service learning
- Teach youth what volunteering is and what it means
  - Build a culture of personal sacrifice/giving back

## **55+**

- Social media use missing this population
- Computer literacy – UNK Senior College training
  - Community Action Agency offers training
- Disabled – how to effectively communicate with them
- Homeless
- Financial access to medication/ Meds or food?
- Do not want to ask for help/Can't afford it – do without it
- Independent/Proud
- Do not know how to market self in today's workforce
- Intergenerational activities
  - College students teach seniors
- Challenge for aged population to stay home in rural areas
- Rural broadband
  - Do not have access to Skyping or Internet
- Lack of accessible housing – people forced to go to nursing homes
- Transportation
  - Limitations on use of HandiBus – Medicaid regulations/benefits
  - Social isolation
- Public perception that housing for elderly is not attractive
  - Educate the public
  - Involve architects/builders
- Engage elderly
  - Want to learn
  - Want to have fun
  - Want to give back
- Strong work ethic

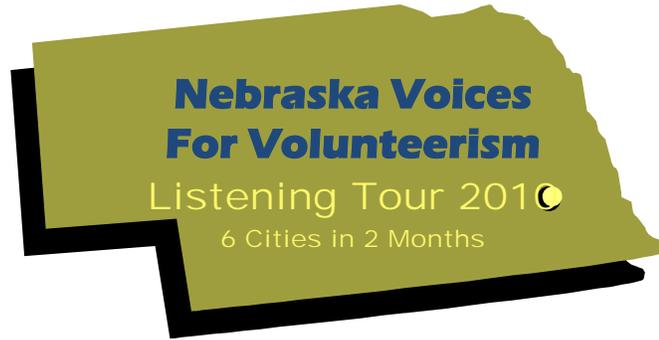
## **Veterans**

- Geographical expanse makes outreach difficult
- Not enough Service Centers
- Mental health services
- Substandard housing

Limited housing available  
Two year waiting list for wheel-chair users  
Apartments not available in 2009 in Grand Island

**How Needs can be Addressed Through Service/Volunteerism**

Educate youth and encourage strong work ethic  
Intergenerational interactions  
Value in connecting youth with people 55+  
Center for Rural Affairs has resources regarding generational differences  
PSA's – Local celebrities/respected individuals in community  
Peer-to-peer discussions  
Colleges →High School  
High School →Middle School/Elementary  
Talk about how you can leave community and return  
USDA has many financial and technical resources, mostly low-cost loans and some grants, in the areas of  
business, energy, housing, utilities, broadband, and community infrastructure  
Need to network for more opportunities for newly disabled, returning veterans  
Need more networking to build in-home care and accessible living units for aged population      A  
collaborative grant to increase services for aged in rural areas will also empower  
Emergency preparedness plan



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## **Listening Tour Feedback** **Lincoln, NE – July 9, 2010**

**15 Participants**  
**2 Commissioners**  
**2 Staff**

### **Parenting Skills/Availability**

Positive: Afterschool programs; Teammates  
Difficulty in making connections in community

### **Older Adult Support**

Living skills/independence  
Transportation services – difficulty in accessing basic services (doctor's appts., grocery stores) esp. in rural areas

### **Language Barriers**

Driver's education for New Americans/refugees  
Barrier to understanding school system, parenting skills, cultural difference, medical care  
No services for older refugees  
Translation vs. interpreter roles  
Literacy & life skills  
Draw retired teachers as volunteers  
29 different languages in schools

### **Education**

No Child Left Behind does not take in to account issues such as mobility  
Students not meeting testing standards  
Lack of cultural diversity training  
Need general liaisons to support teachers, counselors, etc. in schools  
Example of resource liaisons in Omaha schools

**Adult literacy** – new Americans, ethnic communities

### **Awareness of Different Ways of Communicating**

Social media  
Emotional intelligence

### **Employment**

Economic stressors compounding unemployment issues  
Long-term, lasting solutions  
Entrepreneurs and support of micro-financing  
Build skills of individuals

## **Silos Of Funding That Result In Duplication Of Services**

## **How Can Senior Companions & RSVP Assist Older Americans?**

### **Success In Collaboration**

Help those with needs to be involved in helping themselves  
Resources but also responsibility  
Sustainability on personal, organizational, and community level

### **Veterans & Post-Traumatic Stress**

Family support  
At Ease program with Lutheran Family Services

### **Environmental Issues**

Large feedlots and confinement areas affect on air & water quality  
Some issues not being addressed due to state's economic viability  
Individual homes (mold, etc.)  
Low-income & rentals  
Weatherization of older homes  
Radon  
    Not addressed because of cost  
    Some of the highest levels in nation  
Integration of alternative sources of energy  
Recycling  
    Limited availability of curb-side pickup  
    Prescription drugs  
    Distance vs. cost benefit of recycling in rural areas

### **Expensive Medications Hurting People Economically**

Community gardens (good, but require investment of time)  
Village concept (neighbor connection) can help older adults stay in their homes  
"Green village" retrofitting

### **Low-Income Housing**

Newer housing vs. older homes and upkeep  
Poor conditions  
Unhealthy situations  
Lack of funds  
Individual based  
Increased cultural diversity – some people from other cultures have a fear of government  
Progress through trusted individuals

### **Need For Clear Understanding Of What Volunteers Do**

Understanding of volunteer management by elected officials  
Liability if volunteer is injured

### **Neighborhood Services Exchange (Skill Swap Networks)**

Taxes paid on services was an obstacle

### **First Responders In Rural Areas Are Volunteers**

Not enough new first responders to replace those who are "graying" out  
Shortage of doctors, dentists

### **Deteriorating Sense Of Community**



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## **Listening Tour Feedback**

### **North Platte, NE - June 23, 2010**

**6 Participants**  
**1 Commissioner**  
**2 Staff**

#### **Youth**

- Loss of Boys & Girls Club
  - Lack of funding
  - Covered jr. & sr. high school age
  - Gathering place after school
- Need more mentors
- North Platte Schools are trying to focus on basic skills – reading, writing, grammar
- New technologies can help with education – Kindles to 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> graders
- Salvation Army has existing program – Kids' Club
  - Offers summer programming

#### **Underserved Populations**

- Lack of availability of affordable homes and rentals for low/middle income
  - Substandard housing (trailer parks)
  - Resources to help are lacking
  - Foreclosures up
- Many commute to North Platte from adjoining counties for work and services
  - Commuters motivated by superior benefits
- Consumer is cautious about economic recovery
- Agriculture heavily influences local economy
- Decline in jobs paying a living wage
- Businesses are not hiring
- Tenneco-Cozad Closed
  - Possible loss of 400+ jobs
  - Ripple effect
- North Platte Public Schools laying off paraeducators
- Homeless shelter built to accommodate increase of homeless families
- United Way did not reach fundraising goal

#### **55+**

- Transportation Issues – hours of availability are limited
- Low income elderly struggle to make ends meet
- North Platte provides Medical Center with satellite service locations
- Strong senior volunteer program (RSVP)
  - Potential burnout of 55+ volunteers if overly involved

### **Veterans**

- Veteran population growing
- Concern about increase in homelessness among veterans
- North Platte's location leads to transient population
- Railroads/I-80 bring in homeless

### **Environment**

- Need for larger recycling capacity
- Expand recycling initiatives

### **How Needs can be Addressed Through Service/Volunteerism**

- Recycling project if grant is received
- Connect inter-generationally with youth
- Find ways for retired persons to share their expertise/experience
- Structure volunteer opportunities to build in more flexibility and short-term opportunities
- Coordinated volunteer pool would be helpful
- Reaching out beyond "core" volunteer group is difficult because different people have different priorities based on age, gender, etc.
- Develop business employee program
- Local survey confirmed that people 55+ want to give back to community



## Listening Tour Feedback

### Omaha, NE - June 29, 2010

**58 Participants**  
**3 Commissioners**  
**2 Staff**

#### Youth

##### Employment

- Need more job opportunities
- Need career explorations activities
- Counselors need to be more open-minded about career options
- More funding for programs like Youth Build
- Public/private partnerships to provide job shadowing
- Apprenticeships

##### After school programs

- Help students stay in school
- Supply gas vouchers to volunteers who provide transportation
- Need affordable, family activities during summer
- No-fee public pools

##### Parenting

- Clearinghouse for parents to find resources
- Mentoring for parents
- Parenting classes for young men (Fathers for Lifetime)

##### Create volunteer requirements for high school students

##### Survival education

- Coping mechanisms
- Interpersonal skills
- Life skills (home maintenance)

##### Need responsible role models

##### Violence/Gangs

- More afterschool programs
- Continuity/stability of programs is especially important
- Donations to afterschool programs
- Mentoring programs
- Helping youth obtain and maintain employment
- More adults need to get involved with youth activities to learn what their needs are
- Avoid stereotyping youth

##### Need programs for children with a parent in prison

##### Need more sports programs in North Omaha

##### Need for STD, STI, and HIV prevention programs

- High rate of Chlamydia in Omaha

## Underserved Populations

- Need for more businesses and employments opportunities in North Omaha
- Jobs aren't available where people need them
- Employment opportunities for people with disabilities
- Homelessness
  - Education programs for the homeless
    - GED or Adult Basic Education
    - Soft skills such as interviewing
    - Life skills
  - Need to identify current services and effectiveness of services
- Need to market social services as many do not know about the programs
  - List resources on paper shopping bags
  - Clearinghouse of resources
  - Assistance/help is sometimes patronizing
  - Marketing through radio, block parties, flyers at Goodwill possible ways to reach people with limited literacy
  - UNO Service Learning Program has classes on marketing to specific populations
- Income requirements to receive aid from DHHS are too low
- Illiteracy - Need for collaboration among agencies that address issue effectively
- Housing
  - Lack of affordable, *decent* housing
  - Need to rehab buildings and houses in blighted areas
  - Volunteers could work on homes for senior/disabled citizens
- Provide access to examples of success – people don't believe they can succeed because they haven't seen examples of success
- Consumer Education
  - Counsel people how to get off welfare
  - Help people open savings accounts
  - Educate people about predatory practices (ex. Payday loans)
- Refugee/Immigrant Communities
  - Need for free, open-enrollment ESL classes located near populations in need
  - Not enough certified interpreters for refugees/immigrants
    - Affects medical care
    - Agencies not abiding by Title VI laws to budget for interpreters
      - Governor/legislature could send memo to agencies
  - Many Nebraskans unaware of refugee populations in our state
  - Lack of cultural competency in dealing with refugees and immigrants
  - Prenatal care for undocumented persons
  - Legislature could look at successful refugee programs in other states for guidance
- Utility Assistance
  - Funding of sewer repairs in MUD service area
    - MUD bills will increase steadily in upcoming years
- Need for more drug treatment centers
- Need for better mental health care
- Ex-offender re-entry programs
  - Programs hard to find
  - Increase in prison population
  - Use ex-offenders in volunteer programs

## Community

- Transportation
  - Need for public transportation between Omaha and Lincoln
  - Omaha bus system inefficient
  - Create more bike trails
  - Buses don't go far enough into Sarpy Country
  - Potholes
- Promoting healthy eating
  - Community gardens
  - UNMC College of Public Health

Cultural competency

Lack of respect for other cultures

Need for multicultural, multigenerational activities such as fairs, tours, books

Omaha is segregated by specific neighborhoods

Volunteers could organize tours to different neighborhoods

“Passport to Omaha”-type program could encourage people to visit different neighborhoods and cultural events.

**55+**

Elderly need assistance with driving to doctor or grocery store

**Veterans**

HETRA (Heartland Equine Therapeutic Riding Academy) is starting an equine therapy program, “Horses for Heroes” for disabled veterans this year

**Service/Volunteerism**

Funding for small non-profits is scarce

Volunteers are vital

Partnerships with businesses to support infrastructure

Need volunteers to clean and take care of parks – “Adopt a Park” program

Now only mowing near path

Volunteer Management

Sharing volunteer coordinator between agencies

Development of more youth involvement in non-profits

Need for innovative, impactful ideas



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## **Listening Tour Feedback** **Scottsbluff, NE - June 22, 2010**

### **11 Participants (Adults)**

**1 Commissioner**

**2 Staff**

### **Youth**

Hidden population with high risk behaviors

Need for creative solutions, such as entrepreneurial opportunities, for nontraditional workforce with skill sets that communities do not have jobs for

Cost of living – hard to ‘make it’

Limited employers

Limited number of jobs available

Go away- but come back to community

Need activities for youth

Rural areas have greater limitations for youth who “burn bridges,” i.e. for juvenile offenders

Need private businesses willing to hire/mentor high risk youth

Corps can't hire people with criminal records

Need to be more creative with job/business opportunities and support so youth can “prove” themselves

Use of technology - Youth socialize differently and cannot communicate well with everyone; adults need to step into their world to understand youth

Sexual mores

Communities need to embrace what youth are passionate about and how they communicate their passion

Different generations can teach each other

Community meetings held at youth-friendly access points to connect youth with community service opportunities

Youth want to volunteer at

Human Society

Hospital (actually doing something, not just visiting)

Hands-on things

Settings that lead to job skills

Childhood obesity

Box Butte County formed suicide prevention group in response to increase in youth suicides

Suicide prevention needs to address self-esteem, depression, access to mental health

Treatment/access/cost of mental health services for youth

Parents not providing basic needs and drug-free environment – barrier to education

Parenting classes

Love & Logic covers adolescents and pre-school

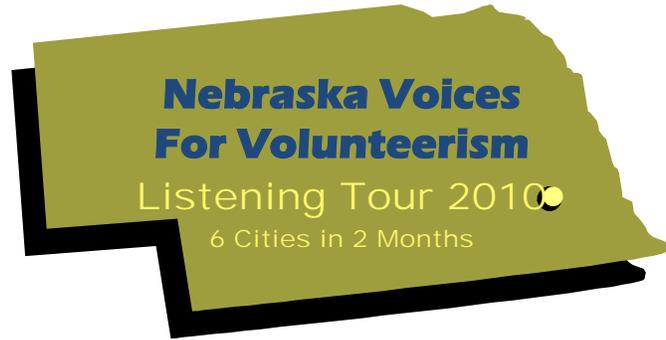
Common Sense Parenting

## 55+

- Need more public transportation
- In home services to allow elderly to stay at home
  - Handy-man help
  - Provide companionship to counter loneliness
- Intermediate care opportunities before assisted living for middle-income
- Seniors who have to come out of retirement due to economy but don't have computer or other needed skill sets
- Seniors living longer and investments are not enough
- Not enough jobs available
- Discrimination in hiring/pay levels may occur
  - Businesses don't want to pay seniors more than minimum wage
- Rural geography – ratio of people to landmass
  - Cost of medical services – need to drive far distances to see specialists
- Need volunteers to shuttle seniors between rural communities
- Veteran suicide rate high (higher than youth rates)
- Proud generation – don't want to receive help
- Seniors seeking good health/fitness
- Medicine or food dilemma
- How do we engage seniors who want to give back to community?
  - Current volunteers can recruit others by sharing their good volunteering experiences
  - Make volunteers feel needed and appreciated
- Senior volunteers are going beyond non-profits' work
  - Care of community
  - Volunteer in homes, hospitals, nursing homes
- Sheridan County youth center started by 83 year-old
  - Provides lots of intergenerational activities/interaction
  - Creates opportunities to teach each other (cross-training)
  - Nutrition education

## How Needs can be Addressed Through Service/Volunteerism

- Mentoring
  - TeamMates Mentoring and Rejuvenate in Box Butte County
  - CrossRoads Mentoring in Panhandle has 3,000 contacts
- New need for business owners to mentor youth to take over established community businesses (succession planning)
- Youth want mentors/opportunities from professional trades – plumbing, electrician, welding, auto mechanics- that can lead to jobs
  - Apprenticeships/Internships
  - Connect with Homebuilders Association
- Opportunities for contractors who know how to preserve historical buildings
  - Connectivity goal with history, too
- High school opportunities in *meaningful* service learning (ex. – Omaha Zoo “poop” research)
- Do/Learn/Take Action
- Native American population in rural areas
- English as a second language population – need to combat language barriers
- Need to reform Service Corps program rules in areas where one person might cross boundaries including state lines
- Hemingford Youth Center also under development



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## **Listening Tour Feedback** **Scottsbluff, NE - July 20, 2010**

### ***Panhandle Youth Identified the Following Needs/Issues*** *(Facilitated and Shared with the Commission by the Nebraska Children & Family Foundation)*

Youth struggle to make healthy relationships and partnerships  
Lack of activities in the community to keep youth off the streets and youth out of trouble  
Not enough mentors in our community  
Need to develop more families mentoring families

#### **Community Awareness of Foster Care**

Train on Native American and Hispanic cultures including poverty issues  
More parenting classes for parents and foster youth who are parents  
Lack of cultural ties with foster child's native culture  
Separation of siblings and parents with no or little visitation

#### **Community Engagement**

There aren't that many youth events or hang out spots  
More after school activities other than sports  
Stigma with youth growing up in bad situation  
Community Center not accessible to low-income youth

#### **Education**

Not enough tutoring available  
Computers are not available to students who can't afford them  
Access to technology and extracurricular activities  
Foster youth lack resources to work toward higher education  
Lack of funds for extracurricular activities in the schools

#### **Employment**

Very few jobs for youth who want to work under the age of 16  
Need more jobs available to youth  
Not enough job training  
Lack of employment opportunities due to age and job skills  
Lack of local business relationships, partnerships and job opportunities; examples: job shadowing on the job training, CAPWN partnerships, Youth Build  
Transportation issues for foster youth and homeless youth  
Lack of funding for transportation such as gas, insurance and purchasing and maintaining a vehicle  
Lack of training in job skills such as filling out job applications, how to create resume and other job necessities  
Lack of internship and work study programs in the Panhandle

**Stigma on Medical and Mental Health Assistance for Foster Youth**

- Lack of funds for paying for medication
- Lack of mental health providers and Medicaid
- Lack of partnerships with voc rehab services
- More sex education, mental health, drug/alcohol and healthy lifestyle information
- Lack of pregnancy prevention and abortion education

**Lack of Skill Development on Financing And Budgeting**

- Youth lack skills that will help them become successful adults, such as cooking, budgeting, savings/ checking, paying bills, appointments and making healthy choices

**Lack of Homeless Shelters for Ages 18-24**

- No youth shelters or homeless shelters in area

**No Public Transportation in Rural Communities**

# **APPENDIX B**

## ***Listening Tour Online Survey***



## ***The Listening Tour Has Moved Online*** ***Share Your Thoughts on Needs in Your Community*** ***And How Service & Volunteerism Strategies Can Address Them***

The six stops of the Listening Tour 2010 were a great success with strong turnouts in Gering/Scottsbluff, North Platte, Kearney, Omaha, Columbus, and Lincoln. Thanks to all who took part!

### **We Want to Hear From You!**

Provide your thoughts, concerns, best practices on community needs through a quick and easy online survey.

## [Take Part Now](#)

### **WHO?**

***YOU! Everyone has a valuable perspective!***

Concerned citizens • community leaders • elected officials • businesses • nonprofits • faith-based organizations • foundations • service clubs/organizations • national service programs • volunteer programs • local health departments • secondary schools, colleges/universities • local government • veterans organizations • and others from any Nebraska city or county are all invited to participate.

### **WHY?**

ServeNebraska is responsible for developing a State Service Plan aimed at utilizing service as a strategy to make the good life in Nebraska even better. This Listening Tour allows you to help ensure a diverse collection of voices are heard and that key issues are addressed in the plan. The resulting plan will serve as a guide for future programs and investments that support service and volunteerism activities. The plan will be posted on the ServeNebraska website and be used to create approaches using service as a strategy to address critical needs throughout the state.

### **QUESTIONS?**

#### **Contact:**

Barbara Wilson Thomas

E: [Barbara.thomas@nebraska.gov](mailto:Barbara.thomas@nebraska.gov)

P: 402-471-6227

## ONLINE SURVEY: The Road to the Nebraska State Service Plan

Please take a few minutes to add your voice and thoughts as ServeNebraska – the Nebraska Volunteer Service Commission -seeks to learn what Nebraskans think are the most pressing needs in their communities and what the volunteer sector can do to address these needs. Cumulative results of this survey, public forums held during summer 2010, and research will guide the creation of the Nebraska State Service Plan which will help structure future investment and program development. [Learn more about ServeNebraska.](#)

**\* 1. In order to best understand community needs throughout the state and to know the sources of input we receive, please provide the key information requested below. In order to best understand community needs throughout the state and to know the sources of input we receive, please provide the key information requested below.**

City/Town:

County:

Name:

Organization/Company:

Email Address:

**2. If you are involved in a national service program, please indicate how below:**

**DROP DOWN MENU CHOICES:** AmeriCorps Member, AmeriCorps\*VISTA, AmeriCorps or VISTA Alum, AmeriCorps Program Staff  
K-12 Learn & Serve, Higher Education Learn & Serve, Senior Corps, Not Involved

**3. KEY POPULATIONS: Nationally, youth and those age 55+ have been identified as priority populations for providing and receiving service. Please mark below if you agree, adding any other population(s) you believe merit priority consideration in the "Other" box.**

- Youth
- Age 55+
- Other (please specify)

**4. KEY ISSUES:** Nationally, the issue areas listed below have been identified as priority areas. Please mark below if you agree, adding any other issue(s) you believe merit priority consideration in the "Other" box.

- Veterans issues
- Education & Literacy
- Addressing Economic Challenges
- Health and Special Needs
- Environment

Other (please specify

**5. COMMUNITY NEED:** Please list the 1 or 2 needs you believe are most unmet in your community

**6. EVIDENCE OF NEED:** What observations, statistics or studies support the need(s) you identified in the question above?

**7. Do you believe that the needs in your community are different from those in other parts of Nebraska?**

- Yes
- No

If you indicated YES above, how are the needs in your community

different?

NEXT

## ONLINE SURVEY: The Road to the Nebraska State Service Plan

Thank you helping to identify key issues and needs in your community. The final few questions look at solutions to these needs.

**1. WHAT IS WORKING?** Please identify some efforts currently underway that are addressing the pressing issues/needs you identified in previous questions.

**2. SOLUTIONS:** What are viable community service or volunteer-based solutions to the needs/issues you identified?

**3. GETTING IT DONE:** What resources must be dedicated or obstacles overcome to attain the solution you identified in the preceding question?

**Thank you for your interest and involvement. If you have questions or would like additional details, please contact:**

Barbara Wilson Thomas, Executive Director  
ServeNebraska - The Nebraska Volunteer Service Commission  
P: 402-471-6227  
E: barbara.thomas@nebraska.gov

[PREVIOUS](#)

[SUBMIT REGISTRATION NOW](#)

**APPENDIX C**  
***Listening Tour Event Flyer and Agenda***



**FIND MORE INFO:**

[www.serve.nebraska.gov](http://www.serve.nebraska.gov)

***Share Your Thoughts on Needs in Your Community  
Explore How Service & Volunteerism Strategies Can Address Them***

**WHEN?**

Listening Tour 2010 stops will be held from 1:30-3:30 pm except Kearney. The Kearney stop will be from 2:00-4:00 pm. The cities and dates for the Listening Tour stops are:

Gering/Scottsbluff – June 22

North Platte – June 23

Kearney – June 24

Omaha – June 29

Columbus – July 6

Lincoln – July 9

**WHAT?**

Join ServeNebraska – the Nebraska Volunteer Service Commission, as we host a **free** 6-city “Listening Tour” to hear Nebraska’s voices about service and volunteerism. Take part in engaging conversations identifying the greatest needs of our communities and how to expand service and volunteerism in our state to address them. You will have the chance to share thoughts, concerns, best practices and more with members of the Governor-appointed ServeNebraska Commissioners and staff. Find AGENDA information:

<http://www.serve.nebraska.gov/pdf/middleblock/listening-tour-agenda.pdf>.

**WHO?**

*YOU! Everyone has a valuable perspective!*

Concerned citizens • community leaders • elected officials • businesses • nonprofits • faith-based organizations • foundations • service clubs/organizations • national service programs • volunteer programs • local health departments • secondary schools, colleges/universities • local government • veterans organizations • and others from any Nebraska city or county are all invited to participate.

**WHY?**

ServeNebraska is responsible for developing a State Service Plan aimed at utilizing service as a strategy to make the good life in Nebraska even better. This Listening Tour allows you to help ensure a diverse collection of voices are heard and that key issues are addressed in the plan. The resulting plan will serve as a guide for future programs and investments that support service and volunteerism activities. The plan will be posted on the ServeNebraska website and be used to create approaches using service as a strategy to address critical needs throughout the state.

**HOW? REGISTER TODAY**

Complete the **Online Registration** at: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Y6VX9CZ>.

Or, **PRINT & COMPLETE** a paper Registration Form and **fax to 402-471-6286**. Find form at:

<http://www.serve.nebraska.gov/pdf/middleblock/listening-tour-registration.pdf>

**LISTENING TOUR STOP LOCATIONS - SEE NEXT PAGE**



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**LISTENING TOUR STOPS:**

- **Tuesday, June 22**  
1:30 – 3:30 p.m.  
GERING/SCOTTSBLUFF  
Western Nebraska Community College  
Harms Center  
2620 Sykes Blvd.
- **Wednesday, June 23**  
1:30 – 3:30 p.m.  
NORTH PLATTE  
Quality Inn & Suites  
Sandhills Convention Center  
South Loop Room  
2101 South Jeffers
- **Thursday, June 24**  
2:00 - 4:00 p.m.  
KEARNEY  
Ramada Inn & Convention Center  
Dahlia Room  
301 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue
- **Tuesday, June 29**  
1:30 – 3:30 p.m.  
OMAHA  
Scott Conference Center  
West Room  
6450 Pine Street
- **Tuesday, July 6**  
1:30 – 3:30 p.m.  
COLUMBUS  
Central Community College  
West Education Bldg  
4500 63<sup>rd</sup> Street
- **Friday, July 9**  
1:30 – 3:30 p.m.  
LINCOLN  
Nebraska Educational Television  
Meeting & Events Room  
1800 North 33<sup>rd</sup> Street

**QUESTIONS?**

**Contact:**

Barbara Wilson Thomas

E: [Barbara.thomas@nebraska.gov](mailto:Barbara.thomas@nebraska.gov)

P: 402-471-6227



**TOUR STOPS**

Gering/Scottsbluff – June 22 • North Platte – June 23 • Kearney – June 24  
 Omaha – June 29 • Columbus – July 6 • Lincoln – July 9

**AGENDA**

**1. Welcome & Introduction**

- ✚ *What is ServeNebraska & what does it do?*
- ✚ *What is the status of volunteering in Nebraska?*
- ✚ *What is going on nationally?*
- ✚ *Why is this Listening Tour happening?*
- ✚ *How will the information be used?*

**2. Discussion**

- ✚ *Review national priorities*
  1. *Engaging & meeting needs of youth*
  2. *Engaging & meeting the needs of those age 55+*
  3. *Education & literacy*
  4. *Addressing economic challenges*
  5. *Health and special needs*
  6. *Environment*
  7. *Veterans issues*
- ✚ *Identify the most pressing community needs*
  - *What are the greatest needs?*
  - *Which populations are underserved?*
  - *Are the needs in your community different than those in other parts of the state?*
  - *What initiatives are working? How could they be strengthened?*
- ✚ *What information exists to validate the need?*
- ✚ *How can identified needs be addressed through volunteerism and national service?*

**DISCUSSION FORMAT**

Break Out Session (if 25 or more attendees)

Full Group Session (if fewer than 25 attendees)

- ☼ *Participants divide into groups of 6-8*
- ☼ *Volunteers record discussion points*
- ☼ *Facilitators guide discussions*
- ☼ *Reconvene & report back to main group*
- ☼ *Examine common & varying insights*

**3. Next Steps**

- ✚ *ServeNebraska Commissioners will review Listening Tour & survey input and data from other sources*
- ✚ *Nebraska State Service Plan drafted and shared publicly online at [www.serve.nebraska.gov](http://www.serve.nebraska.gov)*

**APPENDIX D**  
***Listening Tour PowerPoint Presentation***



**Nebraska Voices  
For Volunteerism**  
Listening Tour 2010  
6 Cities in 2 Months

**LISTENING TOUR 2010**  
*On the road to a State Service Plan*

June-July 2010  
GERING/SCOTTSBLUFF ~ NORTH PLATTE ~ KEARNEY  
OMAHA ~ COLUMBUS ~ LINCOLN

**ServeNebraska**  
Nebraska Volunteer Service Commission

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## WELCOME

Introductions  
Before We Get Started....  
Housekeeping Items

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## WHY ARE WE HERE?

**Objectives**

- Inform about ServeNebraska
- Learn about national developments
- Listen to you:
  - What are the greatest needs?
  - What is working to address these needs?
  - How can service and volunteerism solutions further address these needs?
- Develop a State Service Plan

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## WHAT IS SERVE NEBRASKA?

**MISSION**  
*Mobilizing Nebraskans to Strengthen Their Communities Through Volunteering, Collaboration, and National Service Programs*

- ❖ **1990 National Service Act**
  - Authorized State Service Commissions
- ❖ **1993 National/Community Service Trust**
  - Created AmeriCorps Program
  - Administered by State Commissions

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## WHAT IS SERVE NEBRASKA?

**MISSION**  
*Mobilizing Nebraskans to Strengthen Their Communities Through Volunteering, Collaboration, and National Service Programs*

- ❖ **1994 Nebraska Governor's Executive Order**
  - Created Nebraska Volunteer Service Commission
  - Independent State agency for volunteerism, community and national service
  - Led by 20+ diverse Governor-appointed Commissioners who provide guidance, leadership and policy direction
- ❖ **2008 NVSC Rebranded as ServeNebraska**

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## WHAT DOES SERVE NEBRASKA DO?

**Promotes Addressing Local Needs**

- ★ **Develops Programs and Partnerships**
  - National Service
  - Community Service
  - Volunteerism
  - National Days of Service
    - Global Youth Service Day
    - Martin Luther King Day
- ★ **Facilitates Partnering and Collaboration**
  - Nonprofits
  - Service and Business Sectors
  - Government Agencies

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## WHAT DOES SERVE NEBRASKA DO?

### Programs

- **AmeriCorps**
  - Grows **national service and workforce development** in collaboration with non-profits, schools and municipalities.
- **Disability Inclusion**
  - Maximizes the full **involvement of those with disabilities** in volunteering, community and national service.
  - Collaborates on **volunteer-led disability preparedness** efforts.

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## WHAT DOES SERVE NEBRASKA DO?

### Programs

- **Volunteer Recognition / Awards**
  - Recognizes and provides awards for **outstanding volunteer and service achievements** of Nebraskans.
- **Training and Technical Assistance**
  - Provides **resources and training** to increase professional development and effectiveness.
- Biennial **Governor's Conference on Volunteerism**

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## NATIONAL SERVICE IN NEBRASKA

### AmeriCorps

Federal: Corporation for National & Community Service (CNCS)  
In Nebraska: ServeNebraska

### AmeriCorps\*VISTA

Federal: Corporation for National & Community Service (CNCS)  
In Nebraska: Nebraska State CNCS Office

### Senior Corps (RSVP, Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions)

Federal: Corporation for National & Community Service (CNCS)  
In Nebraska: Nebraska State CNCS Office

### Learn & Serve K-12

Federal: Corporation for National & Community Service (CNCS)  
In Nebraska: Nebraska Department of Education

### Learn & Serve – Higher Education

Federal: Corporation for National & Community Service (CNCS)  
In Nebraska: Midwest Consortium for Service Learning in Higher Education at UNL  
[22+ colleges in 3 states]

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## VOLUNTEERING IN NEBRASKA

**JUST RELEASED: 2010 Volunteering in America Report**  
Corporation for National & Community Service

### National Service in Nebraska

- ❖ 19,000 people participate in national service
- ❖ More than 40 national service projects and programs
- ❖ CNCS commits \$6,100,000\* to Nebraska national service

### Volunteer Highlights [based on 2009 data]

- 509,500 volunteers
- 37.4% of residents volunteer – ranking **4<sup>th</sup>** nationally
- 65.2 million hours of volunteer service
- 47.9 hours per resident – ranking **5<sup>th</sup>** nationally
- \$1.4 billion of volunteer service provided  
[at Nebraska rate of \$16.43/hr (2008)]

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## NEBRASKA - A NATIONAL LEADER

### Rates of Volunteering [based on average of 2007-2009 data]

- **In Top 5** states for rate of volunteerism for 5<sup>th</sup> straight year ranking **4<sup>th</sup>** with 37.4% rate
- **Omaha in Top 20 Mid-Sized Cities** for 5<sup>th</sup> straight year with 33.8% rate
- **Older Adults** [ages 65+] ranked **6<sup>th</sup>** with 36.9% rate
- **Baby Boomers** [born 1946-1964] ranked **4<sup>th</sup>** with 42.3% rate
- **Young Adults** (ages 16-24) ranked **6<sup>th</sup>** with 29.9% rate
- **Teenagers** (ages 16-19) ranked **9<sup>th</sup>** with 36.1% rate
- **Millennials** (born in/after 1982) ranked **3<sup>rd</sup>** with 36.1% rate

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## WHAT IS GOING ON NATIONALLY?

### Serve America Act of 2009

- ⊙ **Bipartisan support**
- ⊙ **EXPANDS: AmeriCorps**
  - Goal: Increase from 75,000 to 250,000 members by 2017
  - Indexes Educational Award earned by members to Pell Grants
  - Educational Award may be transferred to child or grandchild
- ⊙ **NEW: Volunteer Generation Fund** to grow volunteerism
  - \$4 million in 1 yr grants (minimum \$75,000)
  - To State Commissions
- ⊙ **NEW: Social Innovation Fund** to invest in great ideas
  - \$50 million in 3-5 yr grants (minimum \$1 million-\$10 million)
  - Public-private partnership with 1:1 cash match

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## SERVE AMERICA ACT OF 2009 EXPANDS STATE SERVICE PLAN

### The Serve America Act of 2009 says the State Service Plan Must...

- Be developed through **open and public process**
- **Engage** private sector, organizations and public agencies
- **Reach out** to under-represented populations, municipalities and county government
- Include measurable **goals and outcomes**
- Provide **coordination in national service** within the state
- Include plan to **engage people 55+ in service**
- Cover a **three-year period** with annual updates

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## NATIONAL PRIORITIES

The Corporation for National & Community Service identified the following as national areas for priority and emphasis

- **Populations**
  - Youth
  - Persons age 55+
- **Issues**
  - Education & literacy
  - Addressing economic challenges
  - Health and special needs
  - Environment
  - Veterans issues

These issues may – or may not – be priorities in Nebraska & your community

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## WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE LISTENING TOUR?

### ServeNebraska Commissioners and Staff...

- Compile input & develop summaries for **State Service Plan**
  - From Listening Tour – six cities
  - From Online Survey
- Develop, discuss & finalize a **2010-2012 State Service Plan**
- Submit **State Service Plan** to federal agency [CNCS]
- Publish the **State Service Plan** online at [www.serve.nebraska.gov](http://www.serve.nebraska.gov)
- Work with local communities, nonprofits, organizations to implement the plan to address community priorities.

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## LET'S DISCUSS...

### NEEDS

### What are the most pressing community needs?

- Greatest needs
- Underserved populations

How do you know?  
What information validates the need?

Are these needs different than those in other parts of the state?

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## LET'S DISCUSS...

### SOLUTIONS

What is working?  
How do you know?

How can your needs be addressed?

Through volunteerism, community and national service?

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## THANK YOU

For sharing your time and thoughts on identifying community needs & solutions.

We look forward to your ongoing partnership.



State Capitol - 6th Floor West | PO Box 98927 | Lincoln, NE 68509-8927

Ph: 402.471.6225 or 800.291.8911 | Fax: 402.471.6286

Send additional ideas or thoughts to: [Barbara.Thomas@nebraska.gov](mailto:Barbara.Thomas@nebraska.gov)

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