

2.5 THE STATE SERVICE PLAN

The Big Picture Vision of National Service: Developing a State Plan

Beginning in 1997, the requirement to develop a State Plan presented an opportunity for the commission to exercise inclusive leadership. It required the principal service actors in the state to collaborate in a more formal and structured way.

The State Plan served as a vehicle for creating a broad vision for promoting national service and volunteering and for building a solid infrastructure of high quality service programs and support services. The plan was a blueprint for identifying state priorities, themes, and areas of emphasis among all the streams of service: Learn and Serve America, AmeriCorps, and the National Senior Corps.

Narrowly viewed, the State Plan required the commission, the Corporation State Office, and the State Department of Education to come together to develop a single plan. The plan would then serve as the framework for the grant making and deployment of service resources by the three parties. The three parties would assume greater responsibility to coordinate program activities and build support for community service.

More broadly viewed, the State Plan challenged the three principal partners to reach out to other service and volunteer programs operating in the state, and to include them as vital stakeholders. This should include, to the extent that they exist in the state, programs from the Corporation “family of programs,” the governor’s office of volunteerism, the volunteer center network in the state, the higher education service community, the K–12 service community that might not be part of the formal Corporation-funded network, Native American tribal organizations, parent organizations of National Direct grantees, public and private agencies that utilize volunteers, corporations and foundations that have supported programs in the state and have involved employees in volunteer opportunities, and the media, particularly those that may have established their own volunteer recognition or awards programs.

The National and Community Service Trust Act requires that the plan “be developed through an open and public process... that provides for maximum participation and input from national service programs within the state and other interested members of the public.” The outreach and input process varies from state to state. Focus group meetings of different constituencies are common, as are “town meetings” or listening sessions conducted in various locations around the state.

Nebraska’s State Service Plan

The ServeNebraska State Service Plan is incorporated within its five-year Strategic Plan.

A State Service Plan is a state commission’s 3-year strategy for coordinating national service and service activities across all streams of national service in the state. A state service plan ensures that all national service and volunteer service entities within a state—state commissions, State Offices, AmeriCorps National programs and other Corporation grantees and stakeholders, State Education Agencies, state

networks of volunteer centers and/or other volunteer service organizations within the state—are aware of each other and are coordinating activities.

The Corporation encourages commissions to provide enough detail in the plan so partners in national service and volunteer service across the nation can learn from your experience. The State Service Plan informs the Corporation about how the Commission is communicating, coordinating, and collaborating across streams of service. The Corporation is particularly interested in any cross-stream activities centered on our four strategic initiatives:

1. Mobilizing more volunteers.
2. Serving at risk youth and connecting them with service opportunities.
3. Engaging students in communities.
4. Using baby boomers' experience.

Components of the Service Plan

The State Service Plan should address the following questions:

- What are the specific programmatic areas upon which your state is focusing?
- Describe ongoing efforts or special initiatives that involve convening of and/or collaborating with the state commissions, State Offices, AmeriCorps National programs and other Corporation grantees and stakeholders, State Education Agencies, state networks of volunteer centers and/or other volunteer service organizations within the state.
- What non-monetary support, such as training and technical assistance, might the Corporation (headquarters and/or your State Office) provide to ensure the success of the State's service plan?
- The Corporation for National and Community Service requires a report and update on the State Service Plan requirement annually as a subsection of the annual Corporation's Commission Administration grant.