

# ServeNebraska

Nebraska Volunteer Service Commission



# Annual Report

## 2023





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### January 6

LB111 is introduced to make ServeNebraska a statutory agency.

### January 16

AmeriCorps members complete volunteer projects for MLK Day of Service.



### March 12-18

AmeriCorps programs recognize their members for their service during AmeriCorps Week.

### March 28

ServeNebraska hosts a Senators' Breakfast to help representatives learn about the Commission.

### February 16

LB 111 passes unanimously (8-0) out of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee.

### April 16-22

Volunteers complete projects across the country for National Volunteer Week.

### April 20

AmeriCorps members visit Neb. Senators to share their service experience.



### June 14-15

AmeriCorps Program Leaders convene to prepare for the 2023-2024 program year.

## A Message From Our Leadership

It is with great pride that the ServeNebraska Commissioners and staff supported exceptional AmeriCorps programs and members serving in communities across the state again this year. Our partners, AmeriCorps program leaders, overcame challenges to implement impact-driven programs, recruit passionate AmeriCorps members and get things done for citizens across Nebraska. This annual report will provide you with a snapshot of what AmeriCorps-funded programs accomplished during the 2022-2023 program year, the locations across Nebraska where National Service is making a difference and glimpses into why AmeriCorps members serve.

ServeNebraska funded nine AmeriCorps State Formula programs and supported two AmeriCorps VISTA projects, paving the way toward growing our programming statewide in the coming years. We are honored to serve alongside AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) and AmeriCorps Seniors leaders to solve critical needs throughout Nebraska.

Our commissioners supported legislation introduced by Senator McDonnell that would change ServeNebraska from operating under an Executive Order to operating as a statutory agency, allowing the Commission to report directly to the legislature. The Board of Commissioners also hosted educational events such as a Senators' Breakfast and the Step Forward Awards Luncheon to honor volunteers selected by Governor Pillen for their commitment to service.

The ServeNebraska Board of Commissioners and staff thank you for your support and we look forward to serving the great state of Nebraska and its citizens in 2024.



**Cathleen Plager**  
Executive Director



**Kare Heilbrun**  
Commission Chair

**October 6** ▶

The Step Forward Awards Luncheon is held in Lincoln to present 11 awards for volunteerism.



**October 25**

AmeriCorps members gather in Omaha for the AmeriCorps Kickoff conference.

**August 1** ▶

The 2023-2024 AmeriCorps program year officially begins.

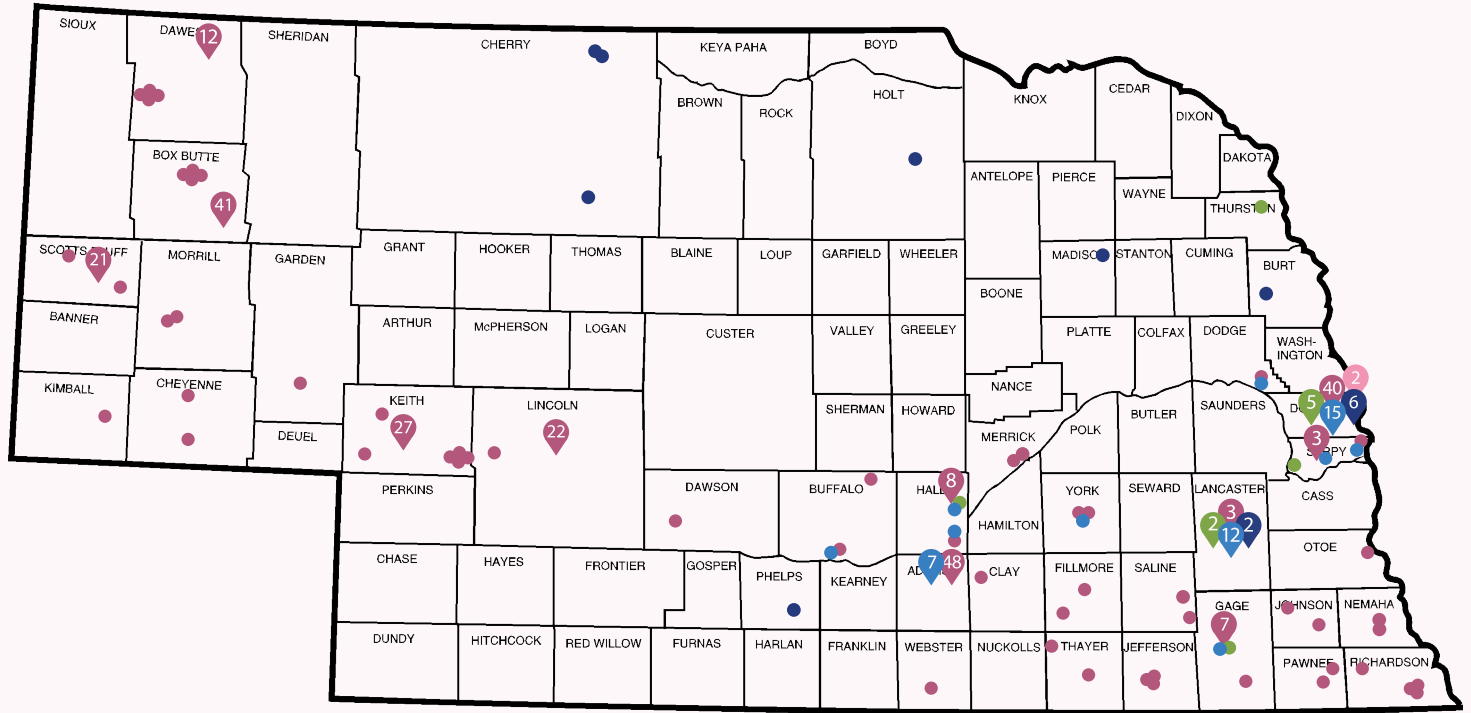


**November 1**

ServeNebraska hosts an AmeriCorps Grant Writing Workshop to help eligible agencies learn how to perfect their application for AmeriCorps funding.



# 2022-2023 AmeriCorps Programming



- AmeriCorps State Service Site(s)
- AmeriCorps National Program(s)
- AmeriCorps NCCC Service Site(s)
- AmeriCorps VISTA Program(s)
- AmeriCorps Seniors Service Site(s)
- 9 Indicates the number of local service sites

## State and National Programs

The ServeNebraska Volunteer Service Commission is a pass-through entity that grants federal AmeriCorps Funding to organizations across the state. These organizations are selected by the ServeNebraska Board of Commissioners and operate AmeriCorps programs to address Nebraska’s most critical needs.

### Partnership 4 Kids

The Partnership 4 Kids AmeriCorps program hosted six AmeriCorps members during the 2022-2023 program year. Beginning operation in 2018, the program helps students succeed in school and achieve their goals through mentor support. When possible the program prioritizes pairing students with the same mentor throughout their studies to facilitate consistency and foster better relationships.

P4K AmeriCorps members served a total of 330 students and 20 earned a post-secondary degree.



### Conservation Nebraska

A total of 17 AmeriCorps members served with the Conservation Nebraska program during the 2022-2023 program year educating Nebraskans on our state’s natural resources, keeping our state beautiful and living more sustainable lives.



In operation since 2017, this program educated a total of 1,074 individuals during this year and 442 of those surveyed demonstrated increased knowledge of environmental stewardship.

### ***Recognizing Increased Skills in Education (RISE)***



Eight AmeriCorps members served with the RISE AmeriCorps program during the 2022-2023 AmeriCorps program year. The program aims to reduce recidivism for students involved in the Nebraska probation system as a result of truancy. Members help the beneficiaries develop skills to help them gain confidence, increase organization and ultimately increase their attendance in school. The program has been operating since 2011.

This year, 452 students across the state were served through this program with 166 of those served showing improved academic engagement and/or social-emotional skills.

### ***Partnership for a Healthy Lincoln***

The Partnership for a Healthy Lincoln AmeriCorps program began operating in 2020. During the 2022-2023 program year, 17 AmeriCorps members served with the organization. The program partners with Community Learning Centers to provide Lincoln students attending Title I elementary schools with after-school programming focused on nutrition and exercise. Through these lessons, children learn how to prepare nutritious meals, try new produce and become interested in physical activity.

This year, 1,161 students were served by the program with 746 of them showing increased knowledge of healthy practices and 418 reporting intent to make healthier choices in the future.

### ***YWCA Adams County***

The YWCA Adams County AmeriCorps program began operating in 2012 and supports the Hastings community in a variety of ways. This year, 13 AmeriCorps members served with the program.

Some YWCA members serve at the ZONE after-school program where students find a safe place to go once school lets out and where they can receive mentorship from role models, assistance with school work and a nutritious meal.



## **Dorothy Nolan**

*AmeriCorps member serving with College Possible*

Dorothy started as a participant in the College Possible program and credits the program with helping her succeed. After graduating, she chose to help provide the services she benefited from.

*"I knew how much the program helped me and I wanted to give back. I hope to help youth make informed decisions about their lives after high school."*





## Sarah Mclain

*AmeriCorps member serving with Conservation Nebraska*

One of Sarah's goals when serving with the Conservation Nebraska AmeriCorps program was to build a strong network of connections in her community. She also had dreams of going back to college to earn her degree with the help of the AmeriCorps education award.

"I serve because I love my community," she said.

Other members serve by providing GED prep courses and career services at the Hastings Literacy Center. During the 2022-2023 program year, 182 people were provided career services and 44 of them demonstrated increased job readiness.

Other YWCA AmeriCorps members operate the Career Closet where donated items are provided for those in need of job-appropriate clothing to start their career.

### ***College Possible***

The College Possible AmeriCorps program has been operating in the Omaha area since 2014. During the 2022-2023 program year, 12 AmeriCorps members served with the program mentoring both high school and college students to help them prepare for college and earn their degree.

These members served a total of 242 high school students and 1,346 college students. As a result of their support, 195 of these high school students successfully enrolled in post-secondary education and 87 of the college students earned a post-secondary degree or technical certification.

### ***Together, Inc. of Metropolitan Omaha***

The 2022-2023 AmeriCorps program year was the third year of operation for the Together program.

Serving with this program, members fight food insecurity by helping to operate the food pantry, tending to community gardens and providing services that increase long-term food security for beneficiaries.

Two members served with the Together AmeriCorps program this year and 300 beneficiaries reported increased food security following their visit to Together.

### ***MENTOR Nebraska***



AmeriCorps members serving with MENTOR Nebraska seek to improve access to quality mentoring services in all regions of the state. They provide training to new and existing mentoring programs to ensure that the quality of mentoring services is up to standard.

The 2022-2023 program year was MENTOR Nebraska's second year of operation and they hosted four AmeriCorps members who provided services to 12 organizations across the state.



## **International Council for Refugees & Immigrants**

During the 2022-2023 program year, 16 AmeriCorps members served with the ICRI program to help immigrant and refugee youth adjust to their new lives in Nebraska and succeed in school. These AmeriCorps members often come from immigrant families themselves and have a deep understanding of the challenges faced by children who are new to this country.

They help students overcome language barriers, find resources and navigate the school system. This year, 212 refugee and/or immigrant youth were served by this program. Eighty-one demonstrated improved academic engagement or social-emotional skills and 61 improved their academic performance.

## **Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA)**

*ServeNebraska is an AmeriCorps VISTA intermediary organization which allows the organization to place AmeriCorps VISTA members with agencies across the state to address challenges facing Nebraska communities.*

*AmeriCorps VISTA members perform capacity-building indirect service for local organizations and focus primarily on fighting poverty.*

## **The Foundry**

This year was the Foundry's first year hosting AmeriCorps VISTA members who assist the organization in supporting nonprofit agencies in a variety of ways. The members can help grow the nonprofit by writing grants, collecting data, engaging the community, and much more.

Two AmeriCorps VISTA members served with the Foundry in 2023. One member helped develop four grant proposals and compiled data on grants available for the nonprofits he serves. Additionally, he met with more than 10 local organizations to assess organizational needs.

## **Omaha Zoo Foundation/Wildlife Safari Park**

One AmeriCorps VISTA member served at the Omaha Zoo Foundation's Wildlife Safari Park with the aim of increasing access to STEM for low-income and diverse populations.

This year was the Zoo's first year hosting a VISTA member. The member succeeded in building



## **Kelly Zach**

*AmeriCorps VISTA member serving with The Foundry*

Kelly told us that the reason he chose to serve with AmeriCorps VISTA was that he was eager to build skills while serving with people who genuinely care about the services they're providing.

*"Every day I come in and meet people who are genuinely dedicated to bettering their communities even to the detriment of their own time. It is truly inspiring to see that there is this amount of goodness in the world."*





## Audrey Paulson

*AmeriCorps member serving with RISE*

Audrey graduated recently with a degree in social work and told us how AmeriCorps helped her prepare for her career.

“Learning about the success stories was very impactful for me and learning the many back stories of why people are on probation, why people do the things they do and what’s going on behind the scenes. Because we learn in school that trauma informs people’s actions but actually seeing it, having that experience, that’s not something I was able to get sitting in a classroom.”

awareness about Wildlife Safari Park STEM programming through the planning and execution of 3 community-wide events.

The member also recruited four regular volunteers allowing the organization to expand programming and began a project to reorganize the volunteer management system and expand volunteer opportunities to people from a larger variety of backgrounds.

### **AmeriCorps NCCC**

*AmeriCorps NCCC is a full-time 10-11 month residential service stream where teams of eight to 10 members complete short-term projects with sponsoring organizations across the country.*

*NCCC teams spend approximately six to eight weeks on-site addressing community needs such as disaster response, infrastructure improvement and more.*

### **Team Oak 1**

AmeriCorps NCCC team Oak 1 arrived in Omaha in July and served with Habitat for Humanity in Omaha for eight weeks.

During their time in Omaha, the team served alongside experts employed by Habitat for Humanity and community volunteers to advance construction on eight different new home builds through tasks such as installing exterior and interior framing, setting up trusses, laying down sub-flooring and more.

They also helped with renovations on nine additional houses by painting, landscaping and installing storm doors and windows. Over the course of their stay, the team was excited to witness six families receive the keys to their new homes.

The team also provided service at the Habitat for Humanity ReStore, where donated goods are available for families to purchase at a discount and proceeds are used to help fund the organization’s construction projects. There, they completed projects such as reorganization, moving merchandise and breaking down old furniture for recycling. ❖

# Nebraska AmeriCorps By the Numbers

**3,381**

AmeriCorps Members & AmeriCorps Seniors Volunteers

**296**

AmeriCorps Service Sites

**35,922**

Nebraskans served by AmeriCorps members

**\$226,511**

Education Awards earned by AmeriCorps members

**37**

Counties in Nebraska with AmeriCorps service sites

**197**

People received job training or placement

**7,544**

Nebraska children & youth served

**1,352**

Volunteers recruited & managed by AmeriCorps members

**11,755**

Hours served by recruited/managed volunteers

## AmeriCorps Pledge



I will get things done for America - to make our people safer, smarter, and healthier.

I will bring Americans together to strengthen our communities.

Faced with apathy, I will take action.

Faced with conflict, I will seek common ground.

Faced with adversity, I will persevere.

I will carry this commitment with me this year and beyond.

I am an AmeriCorps member, and I will get things done.



# Step Forward Awards

The 2023 Step Forward Awards Luncheon was held at the Embassy Suites in Lincoln on October 6. Eleven awards were given for outstanding commitment to volunteerism and for service provided to communities across Nebraska.

Honorees serve as an inspiration to all community-minded citizens and demonstrate the culture of service that makes our state such a great place to live. All Nebraskans were invited to attend to celebrate our state's extraordinary culture of service.

Governor Pillen, who selected the honorees, presented the awards and gave remarks on the importance of community service in our state. Pure Nebraska's Jon and Taryn Vanderford were emcees for the luncheon and provided information about each honoree's achievements, passions and service.

Also in attendance were State Sens. Ballard, Holdcroft, Kauth, Raybould and McDonnell. Representatives from Sen. Fischer's office, Sen. Moser's office and Rep. Flood's office also attended to celebrate volunteers from their district. ❖

## Honorees:

**Beverly Hansen** (*Bertrand*) | Adult Volunteer Award

**Mattie Kucera** (*Raymond*) | Youth Volunteer Leadership Award

**Roger Peek** (*Omaha*) | Disaster Volunteer Award

**Rolaine Blaser** (*Columbus*) | Senior Volunteer Award

**Dennis Hynes** (*Bellevue*) | Veteran Volunteer Award

**Vision 20/20** (*Wood River*) | Volunteer Group Award

**Bob & Helen Arnold** (*Crawford*) | National Service Award

**Thrasher Foundation Repair** (*Papillion*) | Corporate Community Volunteer - Small Business Award

**Uniti Med** (*Omaha*) | Corporate Community Volunteer - Large Business Award

**Senator Mike McDonnell** (*Omaha*) | Jamesena Moore Making a Difference Service Award



## Marah Shai

*Lifetime Achievement Award*

Marah was awarded the 2023 Lifetime Achievement Award for her lifelong love of service. She has been affiliated with a multitude of organizations.

She made the decision in her 20s to devote her life to service and went on to serve with the Peace Corps (*Montserrat, Trinidad*), Sisters of the Poor (*Anchorage*), British Red Cross (*Montserrat*), Shopping for Seniors (*Gering*) and many others.



## Step Forward Awards Sponsors

### Leadership Sponsor



### Award Sponsor



### Corporate Sponsors



## JX Ranch

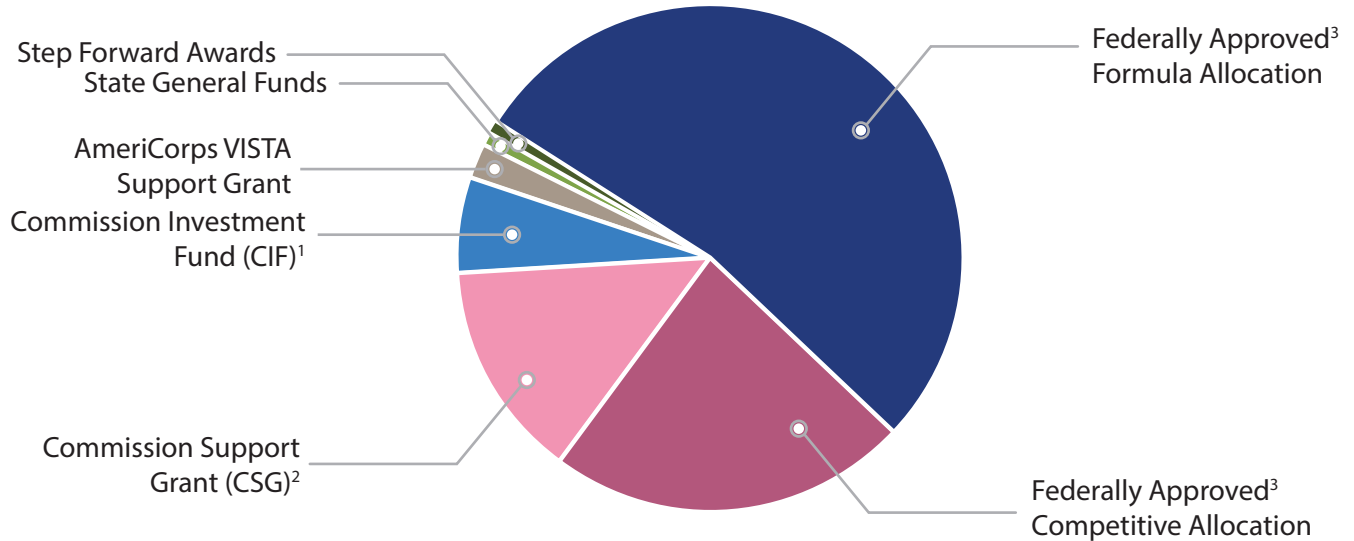
### Benefactor Sponsor

**Bennie & Jamesena Moore**

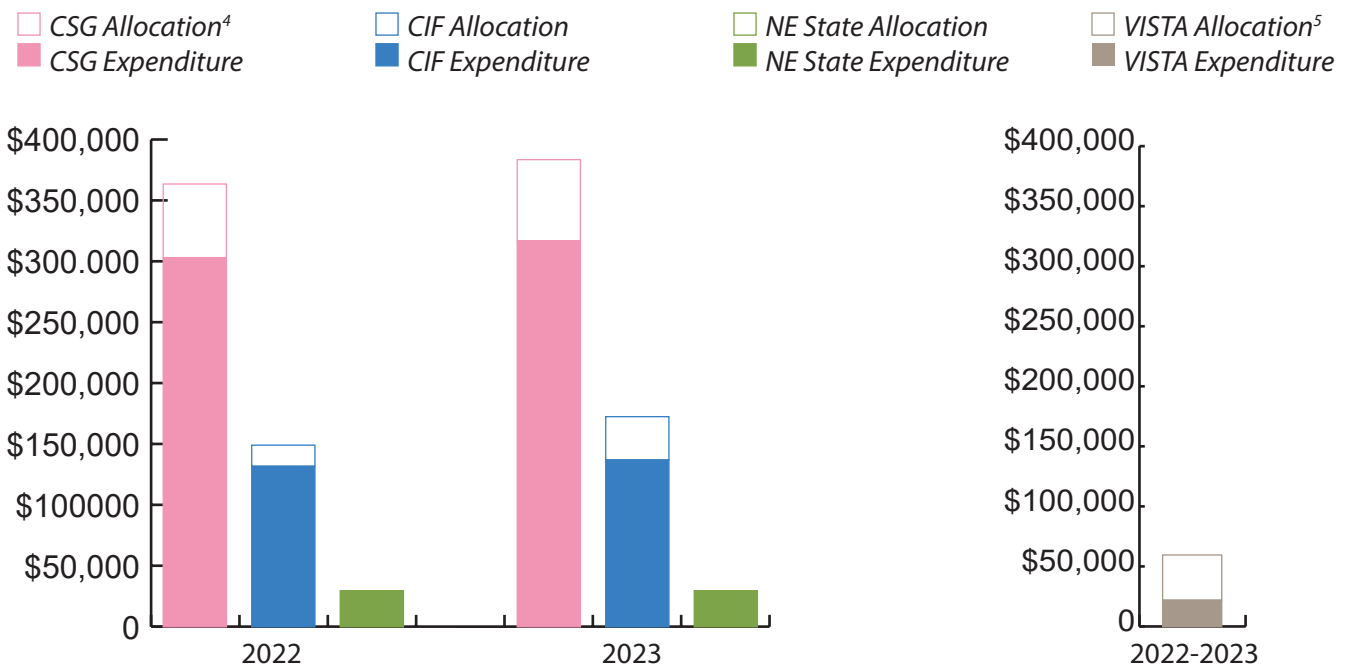


# ServeNebraska Financial Position

## 2023 Sources of Funding



## Administrative Allocations & Expenditures

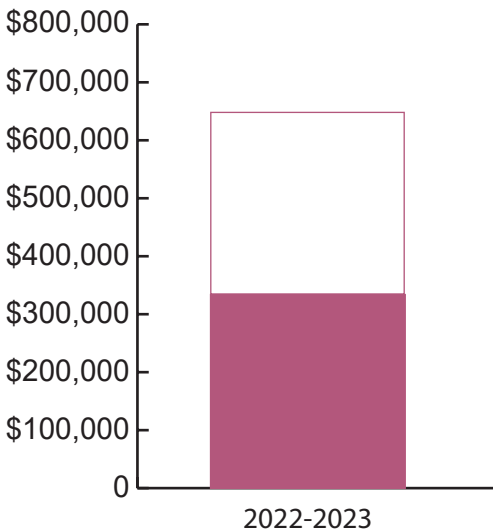


## Step Forward Awards

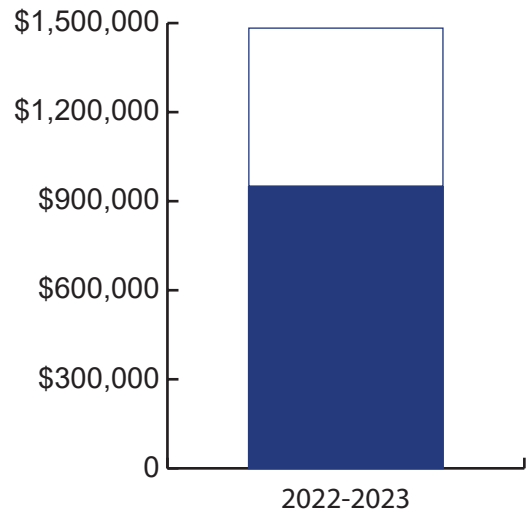
2023 Revenue	\$15,992.50
2023 Step Forward Awards Expenses	\$10,942.44
<b>Net Income<sup>6</sup></b>	<b>\$5,050.06</b>

## AmeriCorps 2022-2023 Program Spending

*Competitive Cost Reimbursement Grant<sup>7</sup>*



*AmeriCorps Formula Grants<sup>8</sup>*



1. Commission Investment Fund (CIF): Funds allocated to ServeNebraska to provide training and technical assistance to ServeNebraska staff and AmeriCorps programs in Nebraska. Unexpended CIF funds can be carried over until the end of each 3-year grant cycle.
2. Commission Support Grant (CSG): Funds allocated to ServeNebraska to conduct Commission business and to support AmeriCorps grant funding. 100% of CSG Funding must be matched with non-federal funds. Unexpended CSG funds can be carried over until the end of each 3-year grant cycle.
3. ServeNebraska is a pass-through entity for AmeriCorps State and National subgrantees. The majority of the Commission's funds are granted to organizations to facilitate AmeriCorps programming.
4. Beginning in 2022, the CSG allocation includes supplemental ARPA funding to be used over the course of 3 years. ServeNebraska has elected to divide the total ARPA allocation into equal thirds displayed as a part of each year's CSG allocation.
5. The AmeriCorps VISTA Support Grant fiscal year runs Aug. to Jul. and funds ServeNebraska personnel to place AmeriCorps VISTA members across the state to complete anti-poverty projects.
6. Step Forward Awards sponsorships and proceeds are used to ensure the existence of the awards in the future and to support initiatives to grow Nebraska's culture of community service.
7. Competitive AmeriCorps Grants in 2022-2023: College Possible
8. Formula AmeriCorps Grants in 2022-2023: Conservation Nebraska, International Council for Refugee & Immigrants, Mentor Nebraska, Nebraska Department of Education, Partnership 4 Kids, Partnership for Healthy Lincoln, RISE, Together, YWCA Adams County, Malcolm X Memorial Foundation.



# Commissioners & Staff

**Kare Heilbrun**

Chair  
Scottsbluff

**CJ King**

Chair-Elect  
Omaha

**Jennifer Worthington**

AmeriCorps/National Service  
Committee Chair  
Grand Island

**Drew Graham**

Community Volunteering  
Committee Chair  
Aurora

**Dawn Hovey**

Finance Committee Chair  
Omaha

**Michael Anderson**

Omaha

**Anastazia Bauer Scheer**

Omaha

**Matt Blomstedt**

Lincoln

**Karen Bredthauer**

Grand Island

**Kelly Fleming**

Omaha

**Lisa Hiatt**

Lincoln

**Marjorie Maas**

Omaha

**Rod Morris**

Omaha

**Ashley Mueller**

Lincoln

**Elizabeth Paleogos**

Omaha

**Joe Popevis**

Lincoln

**Mikki Tighe**

Omaha

**Daniel Cruz**

Ex-Officio  
Kansas City, Mo.



**Cathleen Plager**

Executive Director

**Audrey Jackson**

Deputy Director

**Joni Dulaney**

Fiscal/Grants Officer

**Ken Howard**

AmeriCorps Program Officer

**Russell Koos**

AmeriCorps Program Officer

**Kathy McKillip**

AmeriCorps VISTA Program  
Officer

**Rani Taborek-Potter**

Public Information Officer

**Jessie LaCross**

Volunteer

# Meet New ServeNebraska Staff



## Kathy McKillip

*AmeriCorps VISTA Program Officer*

Kathy joined the ServeNebraska Commission staff in January. As an AmeriCorps alumna, she has first-hand experience with AmeriCorps and a passion for National Service. Kathy is a Certified Economic Developer and Destination Marketing Executive.

She also holds master's degrees in Public Administration, Organizational Management, Business Management and Leadership and Communication, and she brings 16 years of Government experience.



## Russell Koos

*AmeriCorps Program Officer*

Russell has worked in the Nebraska nonprofit sector for two decades and joined the Commission staff in February. Prior to his work with the commission, he held roles such as the director for residential summer camps in Michigan and Nebraska as well as asthma educator for the American Lung Association.

He holds an International Relations degree and is eager to grow AmeriCorps programming in Nebraska.



## Ken Howard

*AmeriCorps Program Officer*

Ken joined the ServeNebraska Commission staff in June following over 30 years working in the Iowa educational system. He holds a Master of Educational Administration and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership.

Throughout his career, he has held various roles including teacher, coach and administrator. He looks forward to using his expertise to help AmeriCorps programs succeed.





**ServeNebraska**  
Nebraska Volunteer Service Commission

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