

oregonvolunteers!



Commission for Voluntary Action & Service

2018-2020

State of Service Report

HIGHER
EDUCATION
COORDINATING
COMMISSION



STATE OF SERVICE REPORT



The **State of Service Report** is composed by the Oregon Volunteers Commission. The report highlights activities of the Commission, grantees, and partners during the preceding two-year period, as requested in ORS 458.568 (7):

Biennially submit a report to the Governor and the Legislative Assembly as provided under ORS 192.230 (Definitions for ORS 192.235 to 192.245) to 192.245 (Form of report to legislature): (a) Detailing commission activities during the preceding two-year period; (b) Reviewing and summarizing, to the extent the commission deems relevant, the content of reports accepted by the commission on behalf of the Governor; c) Assessing the state of national service in Oregon; and (d) Containing specific recommendations for any additional legislation the commission deems necessary to carry out the purpose of the Oregon Volunteer and Community Service Act or to improve the effectiveness or efficiency of the commission.

(cover) Partnerships for Student Achievement (PSA) member, Maxine, serves students at Durham Elementary School in the Tigard-Tualatin School District. PSA members provide one-on-one and small group tutoring to students needing additional academic support in math and literacy.

(above) Heart of Oregon Corps crew members cleared debris and repaired storm damage after the trailhead for Steelhead Falls was washed out by a flash flood. The crew was able to quickly mobilize for this emergency project with the Bureau of Land Management, to fix the damage and get the trailhead operational again.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

About Oregon Volunteers.....	4
Oregon Volunteers Commission.....	6
Funders & Partners.....	7
State Service Plan.....	8
AmeriCorps State Programs.....	10
Commission Funding & Program Grants.....	12
Program Impacts.....	13
Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards.....	14
National Days of Service.....	15
Education Programs & Member Impacts.....	16
Environmental Stewardship Programs & Member Impacts.....	18
Capacity-Building, Economic Opportunity Programs & Member Impacts.....	20
AmeriCorps Response to COVID-19.....	22
National Service Partners.....	24
Advancement of National and Community Service.....	26
References.....	28

AmeriCorps: Benefits the Community and the Individual

The AmeriCorps program is an influential experience in the lives of members.

- 82% of alumni described AmeriCorps as a personally-defining experience.

AmeriCorps creates leaders who can bridge divides and solve problems.

- 9 out of 10 AmeriCorps alumni reported that their experience improved their ability to solve problems.
- 80% of alumni feel confident they can create a plan to address a community issue and get others to care about it.
- 93% of alumni said that after service, they felt comfortable interacting with others different than themselves, as compared to 72% before.
- 94% said that national service broadened their understanding of society and different communities.

AmeriCorps instills in members a lasting commitment to their community and civic participation.

- 79% of alumni are involved or plan to become actively involved in their community post-service, compared to 47% prior. 94% of alumni are registered to vote, well above the national average.

Serving in AmeriCorps sets up members to succeed in a 21st century economy.

- 8 out of 10 alumni say AmeriCorps benefited their career path.
- 42% of alumni employed within six months of service found a job through a connection made in AmeriCorps.
- 7 out of 10 alumni say that AmeriCorps helped them achieve their educational goals, in part thanks to the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award received after service.
- One-third of alumni were furthering their education six months after service.
- More than half of AmeriCorps alumni said the Education Award gave them the ability to pay for career-benefiting training and education that they otherwise would not have had.

(Excerpt from CNCS 2016 National AmeriCorps Alumni Outcomes Study) 1

OREGON VOLUNTEERS



Oregon Volunteers, also known as the *Commission for Voluntary Action & Service*, was created in 1994 to provide Oregonians with a statewide entity to focus service and volunteer efforts, to enhance the ethic of service and volunteerism in the state and provide funds for state-based AmeriCorps programs. As a state commission, Oregon Volunteers' role is to promote and elevate service, volunteerism and civic engagement in Oregon Communities.

The Commission's work is supported and advised by a maximum-25-member board of Governor-appointed commissioners, whose role is to fulfill the statutory responsibilities for state service commissions as authorized by 42 U.S.C. § 12638 and outlined in 45 CFR 2550.50 National and Community Service Trust Act of 1990 as amended by the Serve America Act. The Oregon Volunteer and Community Service Act, passed in 2007, also solidified Oregon Volunteers' role to promote the development of better communities by using citizen participation and volunteerism to foster greater civic responsibility.

MISSION

Strengthening our communities by inspiring Oregonians to actively engage, volunteer, and serve

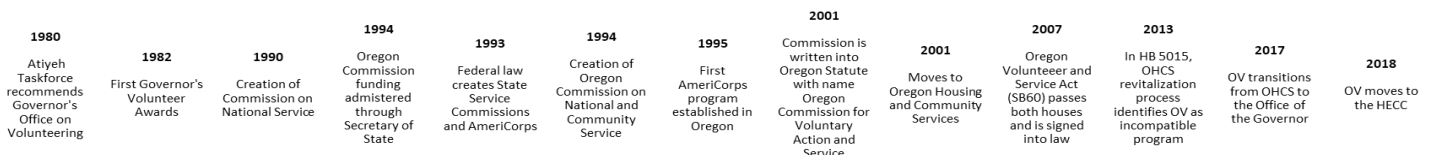
Oregon Volunteers is housed within the Office of Workforce Investments, within the Higher Education Coordinating Commission, and is supported by a Director, Program Officer staff and Commission Board Administrator. This report was prepared by Oregon Volunteers in collaboration with the Oregon Volunteers Commission board, and Higher Education Coordinating Commission staff from the offices of Workforce Investments and Research and Data.

Oregon Volunteers, through federal funding provided by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), administers funding to local AmeriCorps programs, called AmeriCorps State programs. CNCS funds programs and projects that focus on:

- Disaster Services
- Economic Opportunity
- Environmental Stewardship
- Education
- Healthy Futures
- Veterans and Military Families



AmeriCorps State programs provide an opportunity for people to serve at locations across Oregon through nonprofits, schools, public agencies, tribes, higher education institutions, and community and faith-based groups. People serving in AmeriCorps State programs are called AmeriCorps members. Members serve a term of service (typically one year) at their location, earning a living stipend and, at the end of their service term, a Segal AmeriCorps



Education award. Members provide direct services and capacity-building activities, increasing the capacity of the community they are serving to address the community's most pressing needs.

Since 1994, more than 20,000 Oregon residents have served approximately 26 million hours through AmeriCorps, earning Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards totaling more than \$64.1 million. The award can be used to pay for educational expenses at eligible colleges, universities, technical schools, and GI Education Bill programs, or to repay qualified student loans. ²

Oregon Volunteers' primary duties as an administrator of AmeriCorps funding include: development of a state service plan, establishing state priorities for national service programs, providing training and technical assistance to grantees and national service partners, assist in provision of benefits to national service participants, support recruitment of AmeriCorps members in programs, administration of statewide grant competition, and conducting monitoring and oversight.

ORS 458 also describes Oregon Volunteers' duties to support and encourage volunteer engagement by:

- Evaluating the status of volunteerism in the public, private and nonprofit sectors of this state
- Examining methods to strengthen the capacity of volunteer organizations to support citizen involvement
- Educating all citizens about the importance of citizen involvement and voluntary action
- Encouraging youth and young adults to engage in their communities through voluntary action
- Promoting recognition of volunteerism and service into the daily operation of public, private and nonprofit sectors throughout the state

In 2019, members of the Oregon Volunteers Commission visit the Heart of Oregon Corps in the Deschutes Forest in Central Oregon.



OREGON VOLUNTEERS COMMISSION

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The **Oregon Volunteer and Community Service Act**, passed in 2007, also solidified Oregon Volunteers' role to promote the development of better communities by using citizen participation and volunteerism to foster greater civic responsibility.

Commission members play an important role by representing the Commission at events, advising on funding priorities, identifying public policy priorities, setting state goals for service and volunteerism through development of the State Service Plan, informing the legislature on activities of the Commission, and conducting outreach and education visits to raise awareness of the impact of national service and volunteer programs across the state.



Commission Members

Chair, Commission,
Policy and Education Workgroup

Nathan Rix,

OLCC

Vice Chair, Commission

Elias Villegas,

Chemeketa Community College

Chair, Equity Workgroup

Shenika Cumberbatch,

DHS

Chair, Expansion Workgroup

Todd Jones,

West Linn High School

Daniel Altamirano Hernandez,

Centro Cultural de Washington
County

Sierra Barnes,

Bridge Meadows

Jorge Cruz,

Metropolitan Family Service

Heidi Edwards,

Portland Community College

Michael Fieldman,

Retired, (UCAN)

Adele McAfee,

City of Bend

Jayesh Palshikar,

Community Volunteer

Courtney Snead,

Boring But Important, LLC

Mary Greusel,

AmeriCorps, Ex-Officio

2020 Outgoing Co-Chairs:

Derenda Schubert, PhD

Bridge Meadows

Josh Todd,

Campfire Columbia

The Oregon Volunteers Commission is committed to increasing representation from diverse communities and populations within Oregon. Commission positions become available as members finish their term of service, and openings are posted on our website. If you are interested in serving on the Commission, please contact the Director of Oregon Volunteers at: oregon.volunteers@hecc.oregon.gov.

FUNDERS & PARTNERS

AMERICA'S SERVICE COMMISSIONS

America's Service Commissions (ASC) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization representing and promoting state service commissions across the United States and territories. ASC is a peer network of governor-appointed commissioners, along with staff from the state service commissions.³

ASC's work is focused in three core areas including:

- Commission Capacity Building
- Federal Advocacy
- Activation of the State Network

Through ASC, Commission members and staff receive access to professional development opportunities, learning communities, trainings, mentor programs, specialized topic cohorts, an online resources database and commission staff message board, as well as other technical assistance supports. In addition to the regional conferences put on each year for staff and grantees, Commission board members are invited to Washington, D.C. each Spring to attend the Leadership Convening, an opportunity to meet with other Commissioners, Legislators, AmeriCorps leadership and more.



2017-2020 Commission Chairs, Josh Todd and Derenda Schubert, PhD, posing with U.S. Senator Jeff Merkeley while in Washington, D.C., for the 2020 ASC Leadership Convening.

Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)

To improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering.

CNCS is the federal agency, created by the National and Community Trust Act of 1993, that administers the funding of AmeriCorps NCCC, AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps VISTA and Senior Corps programs. CNCS is the largest funding resource for national and community service, and has been supporting service initiatives for over 25 years. In 2018, in response to the federal administration's call for federal agencies to develop recommendations to increase effectiveness, efficiency and accountability, CNCS, under the leadership of CEO Barbara Stewart, introduced the Transformation and Sustainability Plan. The Plan's core components included steps to:⁴

- Ensure core business functions are accountable and effective
- Make it easier for organizations and individuals to participate in programs
- Strengthen impact in communities by prioritizing evidence-based models
- Align workforce and workplaces to better serve customers, meet evolving needs, and ensure efficient use of public funds

Over 2019-20, CNCS transitioned from a 46-office state structure to an eight-office regional structure, and in September 2020, unveiled their rebranding campaign. The new branding includes updates to the agency name and promoted brands, and the first major update to the AmeriCorps logo in 25 years. Moving forward, CNCS will operate as AmeriCorps. The State and National, VISTA, NCCC, and Volunteer Generation Fund programs will be promoted using the AmeriCorps brand, and the Foster Grandparent, Senior Companion, RSVP programs that previously utilized the Senior Corps name will be promoted under the banner of AmeriCorps Seniors.⁵ (right, the new AmeriCorps logo)



AmeriCorps

STATE SERVICE PLAN

VISION

For Oregon Volunteers:

- ◆ Oregon Volunteers is the trusted resource on volunteerism and civic engagement.
- ◆ Oregon Volunteers is integral and vital to Oregon's addressing of our state's greatest needs.
- ◆ Oregon Volunteers is sustainable with resources and stability to meet its mission.

For Oregon:

- ◆ Volunteering is an integral, prominent and essential part of everyday life.
- ◆ Oregon's 36 counties have strong, healthy communities built and sustained through service.
- ◆ Public engagement drives government.

VALUES

Community: Strengthening Oregon through service and volunteerism is the heart of everything we do.

Diversity: Commission programs, members and staff strive to reflect the full diversity of all Oregonians. We are especially attentive to issues of diversity including: race, gender, political affiliation, class, education, geography, interests, disability, sexual orientation, age, culture.

Effectiveness: The results of an efficient, effective, strategic use of resources will further the Commission's mission. We will make decisions in line with short and long-term priorities.

Integrity: We do what we say we will do and only what we are able to do.

Innovation and Creativity: We encourage new ideas and find solutions to better serve Oregon communities.

Partnership: We invest time in building relationships, honoring diverse perspectives, and creating win 3 solutions.

Mutual Benefit - *Gyoto Ryoung:*

We take intentional action to create a triple win for the commission, for our partners, and for Oregon.

What is a State Service Plan?

State Service Plan: A 3-Year comprehensive national and community service plan and establishment of state priorities. The plan must set forth the state's goals, priorities, and strategies for promoting national and community service and strengthening its service infrastructure, including how AmeriCorps programs fit into the plan. 45 CFR 2550.80⁶

In 2017, Oregon Volunteers adopted the **State Service Plan for 2018-2020**, a plan that included 5 major goals for the Commission and national and community service. In 2019, during the annual review of the plan, the Commission revised the plan to two primary goals: strengthen the Commission's services to grantees, and strengthen the Commission's capacity.

In addition to a revision of the strategic plan, members and staff began work to review the Oregon Revised Statutes for Oregon Volunteers, with a focus on the required volunteerism-related duties, of which Oregon Volunteers does not receive any state funding to achieve. Without funding support, OV is unable to fill gaps in services.

In the review, OV found opportunities to update language to reflect current best practices, and to streamline the language to measurable goals, that, while still improving services, provide a clearer view of strategies and outcomes to target funding requests and partnerships.

The Commission further identified the need for increased staffing to support OV's role in Volunteer and Disaster Services. Finally, the Commission identified a name change as important to this next phase of the Commission; a change that would make the primary work of the Commission more clear and reduce the confusion that Oregon Volunteers is a volunteer matching center.

In the 2021 Legislative Session, Oregon Volunteers is requesting funding to support a Volunteer and Disaster Services Program Specialist, and seeking to change the name of the Commission, effective January 1, 2022, to OregonServes: AmeriCorps Service Commission, in addition to ORS Revisions that consolidate and clarify the Commission duties for volunteerism-related activities. (LC 600)

In the fall of 2020, the Commission began development of a new State Service Plan for 2021-2023. In addition to setting new state goals, OV will also conduct a review of the Commission's mission, vision and values, as well as develop a Commission Equity Commitment and Goals framework.

Goal 1: Strengthen AmeriCorps programming in Oregon

- Provide support to AmeriCorps programs to strengthen evidence-based programming and program evaluation.
- Provide targeted training and technical assistance to AmeriCorps staff based upon annual needs assessments and emerging community priorities, ensuring grantees are compliant with federal and state regulations.
- Implement data quality review standards and framework that increase ability of Oregon's AmeriCorps programs to track and submit quality data, providing the Commission and the network with data tools necessary for identifying community needs.
- Provide training and technical assistance and other identified supports to AmeriCorps programs on topics of recruitment, retention, marketing, program development and engagement of community volunteers.
- Develop strategies to increase AmeriCorps membership diversity, including tribal, rural and communities of color.
- Prepare AmeriCorps programs for role in disaster response activities by providing training and technical assistance, including language that allows for response in grant agreements.

Outcome Highlights:

- Increased staffing with hiring of 2 AmeriCorps Program Officers in early 2020.
- TTA offered on multiple subjects through consultants, purchase of online courses, and inclusion in cohorts.
- Updated policies and procedures and established an online site for communications, resources and peer support.
- Have begun process of acquiring an online database for data collection, member management and reporting.
- Have included equity and alumni support questions in state service plan survey and training surveys, in order to learn more about barriers to service for rural communities, communities of color, and other underserved and underrepresented populations.

Work to Do:

- It continues to be a challenge to address disaster response within national and community service. OV is seeking to add staffing in this area, and will investigate feasibility to apply for a 2021 AmeriCorps Volunteer Generation Fund grant, in hopes to address this gap in service.
- As a step towards increasing outreach to new applicants and addressing grantmaking goals, and with the help of an audit by our national association, staff are looking at ways to support expanding national service and increasing accessibility, especially for rural or underserved communities.

Goal 2: Strengthen the Oregon Volunteers Commission

- Increase diversity of Commission membership through more racial, ethnic, youth and regional representation.
- Increase staffing to ensure successful achievement of Commission goals.
- Strengthen local, statewide, and national partnerships, especially tribal, private and philanthropic.
- Develop strategies to collaborate with other related Commissions and Boards within HECC and OWI, under an aligned Strategic Plan.

Outcome Highlights:

- Fostered connections between grantees, partners and the Commission membership, thorough site visits, workgroup and board meeting inclusion.
- Increase of staffing through executive support specialist position.
- Director and other OWI board directors meet regularly, as OWI Leadership Team, to identify strategies and collaborations, to leverage shared goals and unique programs.
- Commission was able to begin hosting annual retreat for state service planning and training.
- Commission chairs have been able to travel annually to ASC Leadership Convening in Washington, D.C.
- Formed workgroups to address long-term goals around expansion, education and equity.

Work to Do:






- There continue to be challenges to increasing membership among underrepresented populations and regionally underserved areas. In 2021, the Commission will form a Membership Committee to identify goals and strategies for membership recruitment and outreach.
- The Commission continues to seek additional staffing, primarily through the addition of a Volunteer and Disaster Services Specialist.
- The Commission has continued work to do to build relationships with legislative champions, alumni, and community partners, particularly volunteer organizations. A focus of outreach in the next year will also include increased outreach to rural communities and local governments.

AMERICORPS STATE PROGRAMS

Oregon’s AmeriCorps State subgrantee programs operate in most counties within the state, providing direct services in a mix of urban and rural communities under the federal focus areas of education, economic opportunity, environmental stewardship and community capacity –building. Programs listed below operated programs during the 2018-2020 program years

	<p><u>Campus Compact of Oregon: <i>Connect2Complete</i></u> <i>Counties: Statewide</i></p> <p>The Connect2Complete AmeriCorps program seeks to help participating campuses tackle chronic absenteeism and deepen student engagement for continued success. C2C members develop, implement, and expand K12 and community college academic programs that increase attendance and student engagement through mentorship, family engagement, and service learning. The program focuses on low-income students, students of color, and first-generation students.</p>
	<p><u>College Possible Oregon: <i>College Possible AmeriCorps</i></u> <i>Counties: Statewide</i></p> <p>College Possible Oregon is a nonprofit organization working to close the degree divide for low-income students in Oregon. Programming connects these talented students with dedicated AmeriCorps members using proven campus-based and tech-connected coaching beginning their junior year of high school and continuing through college graduation.</p>
	<p><u>Confluence Environmental Center: <i>Confluence Environmental Center AmeriCorps</i></u> <i>Counties: Clackamas, Multnomah, Washington</i></p> <p>Confluence AmeriCorps Members address critical environmental needs related to energy and resource conservation, healthy watersheds, and environmental education, including garden-based education. Confluence Members primarily serve low-income communities and communities of color, as these populations are most affected by social and environmental inequities.</p>
	<p><u>Ethos Music Center: <i>Rural Outreach Project</i></u> <i>Counties: Statewide</i></p> <p>AmeriCorps members provide youth in rural underserved communities with opportunities to access music education and programming. The program also aims to stimulate ongoing support for music education offerings. Members serve in small rural communities in central and eastern Oregon.</p>
	<p><u>Forest Grove School District: <i>Partnerships for Student Achievement</i></u> <i>Counties: Washington, Yamhill</i></p> <p>AmeriCorps members serve in Washington & Yamhill County elementary, middle and high schools. AmeriCorps members support students through tutoring and mentoring. Members also increase capacity through recruitment and management of community volunteers.</p>
	<p><u>Heart of Oregon Corps: <i>Heart of Oregon AmeriCorps</i></u> <i>Counties: Cook, Deschutes, Jefferson, Portland Metro, and Wheeler</i></p> <p>Heart of Oregon Corps engages opportunity youth AmeriCorps members who improve their own economic opportunities while conducting environmental stewardship on public lands in central Oregon. The AmeriCorps program aims to protect at-risk habitats and mitigate fire risk on public lands, while empowering local opportunity youth to gain skills, increase resiliency, and succeed in the workforce. The target population for members is age 17-24.</p>

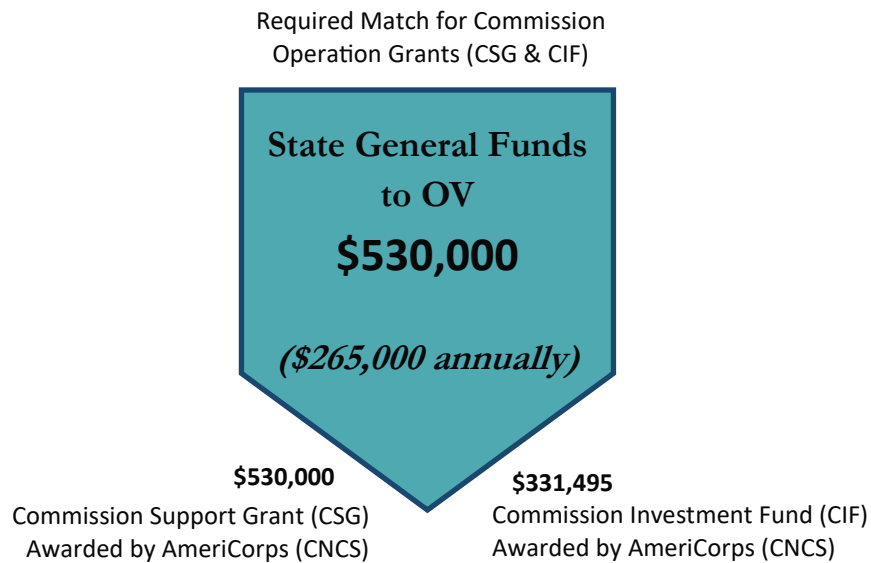
2018 & 2019 PROGRAM YEARS

	<p><u>Metropolitan Family Service: <i>Metropolitan Family Service AmeriCorps</i></u> <i>Counties: Portland Metro, Multnomah, Clackamas</i></p> <p>MFS AmeriCorps members support the agency's three critical initiatives: strengthening early childhood development and building youth success; developing and promoting effective approaches to community-based health and wellness; advancing individual and family economic well-being. Members facilitate life skills and leadership learning opportunities for students, support family and community engagement activities, recruit and coordinate community volunteers, and conduct financial education workshops.</p>
	<p><u>Northwest Youth Corps : <i>Community Stewardship Corps</i></u> <i>Counties: Harney, Lake, Clatsop, Tillamook, Hood River, Lane, Multnomah and Clackamas</i></p> <p>AmeriCorps programs at NYC engage youth and young adults in environmental stewardship projects designed to increase access to open spaces and outdoor recreational opportunities, add economic value, and promote healthy lifestyles among AmeriCorps members and the communities they serve. The Community Stewardship Corps focuses on providing employment skills in the environmental field to opportunity youth throughout the State. <i>(final year of grant—2018)</i></p>
	<p><u>Open School: Post-Secondary Success Program</u> <i>County: Multnomah</i></p> <p>Post-Secondary Success AmeriCorps members serve closely with staff and students at Open School North, Trillium Charter School and Open School East to create learning environments where underserved students can define and own their success. <i>(final year of grant —2018)</i></p>
	<p><u>University of Oregon : <i>Resource Assistance for Rural Environments (RARE)</i></u> <i>Counties: Statewide</i></p> <p>The mission of the RARE AmeriCorps program is to increase the capacity of rural communities to improve their economic and environmental conditions through the assistance of trained graduate-level participants. RARE participants live in and assist communities in the development and implementation of projects for achieving a sustainable natural resource base and improving rural economic conditions.</p>
	<p><u>United Community Action Network (UCAN): <i>United Communities AmeriCorps (UCA)</i></u> <i>Counties: Coos, Curry, Douglas, Jackson, Josephine</i></p> <p>UCA members work with nonprofits, government agencies, schools, and faith-based organizations to meet critical needs throughout five SW Oregon counties. UCA members help bridge barriers to educational opportunity, mentoring, job skills development, employment resources, and healthy living. Members' projects promote equity, justice, and inclusion for the region's most vulnerable by improving access to social services.</p>

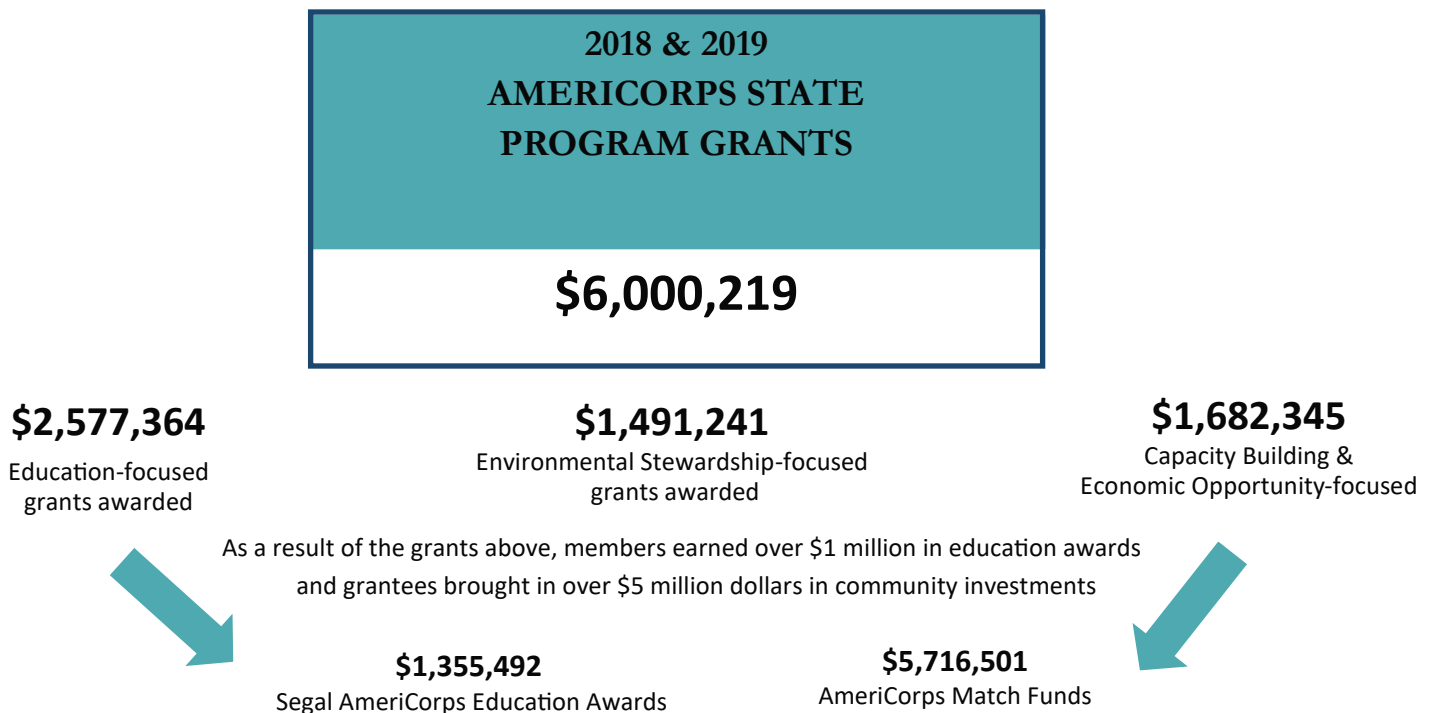
COMMISSION FUNDING & PROGRAM GRANTS

The **Commission Support Grant (CSG)**, the primary operating grant for state Commissions, provided by CNCS, requires a dollar-for-dollar match. The General Funds that Oregon Volunteers receives ensures the Commission's ability to administer AmeriCorps programs and provide funding to AmeriCorps programs as well as apply for the **Commission Investment Fund** grant (CIF). The CIF grant provides training and technical assistance funds, which cover costs of development of the State Service Plan, evaluation activities, training and travel for staff, Commission members and grantees, all-service events such as Kick-Off and LifeAfter AmeriCorps, hiring of expert trainers and more. In 2020, these funds assisted OV in purchasing critical personal protective equipment for AmeriCorps State program staff and members.

Commission and AmeriCorps Funding for 2018 & 2019



As a result of OV's operations as a State Commission, local organizations can apply for AmeriCorps State program grants



PROGRAM IMPACTS

AmeriCorps State programs placed **438 members in service sites across the state in the 2018-2020 biennium**. Those members provided services in their community such as tutoring, environmental education, college readiness, restoration of green spaces, career preparation and volunteer management.

**Program years are typically one-year long, from July to July. For most programs, the COVID-19 pandemic caused service year interruption or delays, leading to extended service year periods in order for members to complete their hours and activities. Due to the extended program year, 2019 data included within this report is partial. As more data becomes available this report will be updated.*

2018-19 and 2019-20 Program Year Highlights

EDUCATION

2,012

Students showed improved academic engagement and emotional / social development

796

Students improved literacy and math skills

4,829

K-12 students completed AmeriCorps-supported education programs

2,589

Students entered a postsecondary program and received postsecondary education support

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

320,543

Trees and shrubs planted

1,149

Acres of green spaces, parks and public lands restored

31,201

Youth attended environmental stewardship trainings

26,312

Adults attended environmental stewardship trainings

45%

of education event attendees identify as people of color or part of low-income communities

CAPACITY BUILDING

10,424

Volunteers recruited and managed by AmeriCorps members

52,783

Volunteer Hours contributed by volunteers leveraged by AmeriCorps members

438

AmeriCorps Members served in communities increasing their capacity to address unmet needs

61

organizations received capacity-building services

SEGAL AMERICORPS EDUCATION AWARDS

AmeriCorps members earn an education award after successfully completing a term of service. The award can be used to repay qualified student loans, or to pay for current educational expenses at eligible institutions and training programs. The award is available for seven years after it is earned and is subject to state and federal taxes. In 2020, the award for a full-time member (1700 hours) is \$6,195 and will increase to \$6,345 for the 2021 program year. For the program years covered in this report, (2018 & 2019), a potential \$1,355,492 was earned in education awards. ⁷

Since 1994, Oregon AmeriCorps members have earned over \$64 million in education awards. \$33.5 million in education awards have been paid to qualified schools in Oregon for educational expenses, and over \$2.1 million have gone towards student loan payments that qualify under Title IV of the Higher Education Act or Titles VII or VIII of the Public Health Service Act.. Because the education award is subject to both state and federal tax, using the education award brings on a tax burden that many members cannot afford, after a year of earning a modest living allowance during their term of service. Legislative efforts, on the federal and state level, are being pursued in order to reduce this burden and allow members to fully access their benefits and leverage their year of service. This effort is one of many to support college access and affordability.

OREGON IS #23 IN ED AWARD PAYMENTS

\$64.1M IN ED AWARDS HAVE BEEN EARNED BY MEMBERS IN OREGON SINCE 1994

\$33.5M HAS BEEN PUT BACK INTO OREGON EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

ED AWARD USAGE

TOP 15 INSTITUTIONS by USAGE of AWARDS ⁸	PAYMENTS	ALUMNI
PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY	\$6,375,328	2,120
PORTLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE	\$4,553,772	2,071
UNIVERSITY OF OREGON	\$3,090,046	1,105
OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY	\$2,755,396	1,149
LEWIS & CLARK COLLEGE	\$1,689,825	547
LANE COMMUNITY COLLEGE	\$1,114,106	600
UNIVERSITY OF PORTLAND	\$1,052,897	419
CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY	\$962,339	244
CENTRAL OREGON COMMUNITY COLLEGE	\$915,044	447
SOUTHERN OREGON UNIVERSITY	\$795,963	350
WILLAMETTE UNIVERSITY	\$664,791	270
MT HOOD COMMUNITY COLLEGE	\$538,650	268
CHEMEKETA COMMUNITY COLLEGE	\$504,527	210
WESTERN OREGON UNIVERSITY	\$482,869	245
PACIFIC UNIVERSITY	\$464,493	190

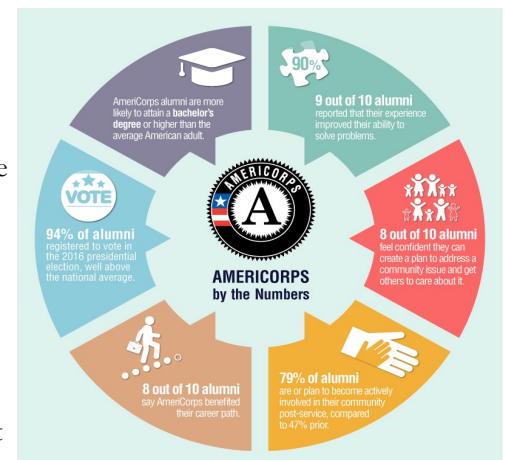
Studies⁹ show that AmeriCorps alumni stay civically engaged, and are more likely to attain a bachelor's degree or higher.

In 2020, AmeriCorps launched the **Schools of National Service** campaign, to raise awareness of the incentives and awards educational institutions can offer to attract alumni and make education more accessible and affordable.

Schools of National Service can increase access to education for AmeriCorps alumni by extending the value of their Ed Award. Post-secondary

institutions can qualify by agreeing to provide any of the following incentives to members and alumni: ¹⁰

- Tuition matching for the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award (can be specific to a school or program)
- Scholarship or fellowship to AmeriCorps alumni
- Priority points for admission consideration
- In-state tuition for AmeriCorps alumni
- Cover expenses like books and supplies, room and board, or other personal costs
- One-year enrollment deferrals for individuals to serve in AmeriCorps
- Academic credit for AmeriCorps experience



NATIONAL DAYS OF SERVICE



Throughout the year, AmeriCorps members have opportunities to come together for special events related to their service. **National Service Day** events remind members that they are part of a national service network and allow them to serve with community volunteers, other AmeriCorps members, and other national service participants.

Oregon Volunteers requires AmeriCorps programs to participate in at least two National Service Day projects per year with their members. The major National Service events include **Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service, Cesar Chavez Day, AmeriCorps Week, Global Youth Service Day, National Day of Service and Remembrance (Sep. 11), and Make a Difference Day.**

Examples of recent service day projects include creating health and hygiene packages for at-risk families, assisting mothers in ‘shopping’ for clothing and other donated items, and helping at a local food bank. These events also raise awareness and visibility of AmeriCorps throughout the state, since members typically serve alongside community members in roles that are different than their usual service positions.



(top row) MFS AmeriCorps Members, Daisy and Brittani supporting NW Children’s Outreach to bag hundreds of diapers for families; UCA Member Tyler coordinated a trail revitalization project at Millicoma Marsh Nature Trail for MLK, Jr. Day; HOC Corpsmember, Aubrey, at Habitat for Humanity ReStore in Bend, on MLK, Jr. Day.

(bottom row) UCA members taking a break after spending Cesar Chavez Day clearing roadways in Elkton, after the 2018 snow storm; PSA AmeriCorps members participating in an Adopt-A-Road service project; UCA Member Adele, on an MLK, Jr. Day service project site.

EDUCATION PROGRAMS



College Possible students during their senior year. Andrew (left, back) now serves as an AmeriCorps member and Senior Coach at Centennial High School in Portland.

“My journey with College Possible has been a long and unforgettable one. Although I knew college was for me, I never imagined that I would actually have a Bachelor’s degree.

I never imagined that I would actually walk at commencement. I never imagined that I would lead the path for my younger siblings in higher education. I never imagined that this would be and is my reality. I can’t help but be thankful and appreciate this program for helping make all this possible.”

*Yulissa,
a College Possible student who is now a coach with College Possible Oregon*

“Student persistence and resilience is at the heart of near-peer coaching and the service we do at College Possible. A student whose family was unable to file the FAFSA for 2018 realized one day that she could not receive any financial aid to go to college in the fall. This student became upset at the idea that she would have to wait to start college, and even then may not be able to attend the following year if her parents still could not file their taxes. The next day, the student came into one of our coaches’ office excited about an opportunity the coach had sent her at Portland Community College that may be able to help her cover tuition and books in order to earn her associate’s degree.

Rather than dwelling in the complete lack of fairness she experienced in financial aid, this student got straight to work writing one of the most well-articulated essays this coach had seen convincing the program why she deserves a chance to go to college. This is the exact reason for why College Possible is here to help students overcome unbelievable hardships.”

- 2019 Progress Report, College Possible Oregon



“Denisse served at Chemeketa Community College in the CAMP program supporting migrant and immigrant Latinx students. One of the biggest successes were the students Denisse was able to support in completing their FAFSA and ORSSA applications to receive financial aid for college as well as the number of students Denisse helped with their transfer applications to 4-year colleges and universities. As a graduate of the CAMP program, Denisse epitomizes the type of support Campus Compact of Oregon hopes AmeriCorps can provide to low-income and marginalized students. Denisse served as a near peer, who represented the people she served and understood their struggles and successes. She wasn’t a savior but a colleague and champion. We are so proud of her service and her success.” - *Campus Compact Oregon Progress Report*

“15/22 of my students have higher attendance than they did last year and 13/22 of the students are coming more than 90% of the time. On a more emotional and environmental level, it is comforting to know that at least half of the students on my caseload seem to enjoy talking to me and ask me questions when they have them. I also have a handful of kids who have entrusted me with their social issues which helps me gain a stronger understanding of what they are going through and their communication style. As a result, I am feeling quite confident about my service thus far.”

- Sierra, C2C AmeriCorps member, Tigard High School

MEMBER IMPACTS



"When I first started working with this student, they were timid and unsure of their skills. They came into my math lab and asked for a clarification of some math terms and how to graph parabolas. I greeted them, chatted with them a bit, and started to work with them on what they needed help with. When the session was over due to time constraints, I invited them back the next day to keep working with me. The next day they came in with 3 other students and have since become one of my peer tutors. I see this student excel every day and develop a passion for helping their fellow students, even if they're unsure about some of the skills used. But having the safety net to fall back on gives them comfort and stability."

*- Michael, **Partnerships for Student Achievement**
AmeriCorps Member*

"A few weeks after I started my service term, I began working one on one with a fifth grade student. She had one of the lowest DIBELS scores in her grade, and she needed additional practice with fluency. I use the 6 minute solution with her, in hopes that it will help build up her fluency and WPM count. The first few cold reads that she did, I noticed that she would get really down on herself based on the number of words that she would read and if she made errors. I would remind her each time she would feel down that all of this was just additional practice and would in no way be graded by her teacher. I created a chart that highlighted each of her cold and hot read scores and it showed that she had been making small improvements since her fall DIBELS score.

One morning, I grabbed her DIBELS book and the chart I made and showed her that she has read an average of about 10 words more per minute than she did in the fall (in regards to her cold reads). When she saw the chart and I explained what the lines represented and I saw her light up in a way that I had not seen before. She told me she was very proud of herself and I could tell she was feeling more confident in her abilities."

*- Kristen, **PSA AmeriCorps Member***



Student in music class with Ethos Rural Outreach AmeriCorps Member.

"I've learned a lot this year, so much more than I thought I could know about music! I enjoy spending each day in class with my friends and I like my music teacher."

"It is my favorite class and I look forward to it all day!"

*- 4th grader at Monument School, **Ethos Rural Outreach** program*

"I have really appreciated the opportunity to teach music to all of these great kids. It has made me grow in character so much in the last half year. I've developed and maintained habits of good time management, conflict resolution, on-the-fly creativity, and organizational skills that I wouldn't have believed to have gained in such a short time."

*- Janessa, **AmeriCorps member serving at Monument School in Monument, OR with **Ethos Rural Outreach.*****

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP PROGRAMS



In its final year as an OV grantee program (2018), **Northwest Youth Corps** members improved 120 acres of land, through fuel reduction and invasive vegetation removal. Members also planted 5,500 poplar trees, 7,100 native plants and shrubs and opened 70 campsites.



NYC Eugene member Gannon works to clear Black Canyon Campground from downed trees caused by a rare winter snow-storm.

Shevlin Park Burn Prep – Bend Parks & Rec District (BPRD)

Crews contributed to BPRD’s multiyear Shevlin Park controlled burn plan. By breaking up dense growth areas and creating a fire line along private property lines, large areas could be safely burnt for preventative wildfire control without danger of losing control. Because Shevlin Park directly abuts private homes and the Deschutes National Forest, the crew’s service reducing the load of fire fuels was vital to the safety of the surrounding area. The project also provided the opportunity for HOC crewmembers to educate members off the Cascade Youth Corps, who were visiting from the West side of the Cascades. Our young people were able to describe the project prescription, the tools, and the history of fire in the region. They were also able to return in early November to observe the burn in action, they stood alongside BPRD Staff, USFS wildland firefighters, and concerned members of the public, to observe the controlled burn on site.— **Impact Story, HOC Progress Report**



Heart of Oregon Corps members from both the 2018-19 and 2019-20 grants gather to celebrate the successful completion of several members. They are also celebrating the arrival of new members who have obtained their First Aid/CPR certificates.

MEMBER IMPACTS

Kareena is an AmeriCorps member with the City of Gresham doing forest health education and outreach. She recently helped cohost Johnson Creek Watershed Council's largest restoration event called Watershed Wide. The site she hosted was at Main City Park in Gresham, which is where the food party after the event was going to occur. Main City Park's location was fortunate to have 3 Bilingual Spanish-speaking interns from Johnson Creek, and advertised this through Facebook and other channels, translating the advertisements into Spanish.

The turnout was huge for the event and over half of the volunteers were native Spanish-speakers who brought family members, kids, and friends. There were great moments when volunteers who had never met each other were planting shrubs and ferns together, having fun and laughing together. This event brought people together in the Gresham community to perform a public act of service to better the environment in a local park, encouraging biodiversity to thrive.

—*Confluence Environmental Center Progress Report*



Confluence Environmental Center AmeriCorps Members participate in several team building activities as part of their first Team Meeting. This activity requires members to work together and get the ball to roll towards their goal without falling.



HOC AmeriCorps crews repaired range fencing located to the east of Bend. Updating old fencing improves wildlife migration, while protecting threatened and endangered species. Amber, a Land Stewardship Trainer, exhibits how to place reflectors on the wire fence.

“COVID-19 has presented challenges to performing site visits, resident and youth outreach safely and responsibly at Dakota’s site. In spite of this hurdle, Dakota worked to adapt to the current situation by creating educational content in the form of a recycling video for businesses and multifamily residents. This video outlined how to recycle in Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington counties and required a great deal of learning and patience to carry out. Dakota gained video editing skills, shot many versions of the video and received amazing feedback from supervisors to get to the final product.

He gained a lot of newfound respect and empathy for educators who create video content on a regular basis after learning from this experience.

From this experience, Dakota also was able to create a document of lessons learned for continued in-house video making at the County. This document will be used by the business outreach team and greater sustainability team to continue serving community members and increase the number of businesses that “recycle right” in Clackamas County.” -

Confluence Environmental Center, Progress Report

CAPACITY BUILDING & ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY PROGRAMS

“RARE (Resource Assistance for Rural Environments) gives us the opportunity to bring resources to communities that might not have the capacity to pursue the type of community development that we are focusing on. This program is an opportunity to bring new resources to help tackle long standing problems faced by rural communities.

Through the few months that I have been working in Lakeview I have seen only positive responses to my arrival in the community. I have allowed this label to be an exciting way to introduce the work that I am doing, and frame the renewable energy conversation in a new light. When I introduce the renewable energy development work that I am doing I have been surprised at the openness people show in sharing their stories and desires for moving to renewables... There is a clear shared motivation to do what needs to be done in order to make significant change and it is easy to get swept up in the obvious optimism for the community’s future.”

- Emma, Lake County Resources Initiative AmeriCorps Member



Year 26

2019-20

“Just being present in the community as a dedicated servant of the public has a big impact in this small rural area. I have been surprised over and over again that my ‘reputation precedes me’ simply due to the fact that I have chosen to be here and bring my passion and background to the Illinois Valley.”

- Erica, RARE AmeriCorps Member serving with the Illinois Valley Soil and Water Conservation District



“At the start of the New Year my site began our first free cooking course for low income community members. The program was a bit of a challenge to get off the ground this year, but it was definitely worth it to see how much our volunteers and course participants enjoyed it. Each class we provided a grocery bag of items that the participants could use to make the course recipes at home, or challenge themselves to make something new. They were a lively, engaged group who seem to enjoy the nutrition education portion as much as the cooking portion of the course.

We had a nice age spectrum in the class from a 19 year old, to 2 couples with young families, to a senior veteran. All really seemed to enjoy being in the class and working together to create the meal we prepared in class. Because we offered childcare onsite, the young families were able to bring their children in to eat the meal with them.”

- Lydia, Nutrition Educator at UCAN Douglas County Food Bank in Roseburg, OR

MEMBER IMPACTS



“Christine and Maris, UCA AmeriCorps Environmental Education & Outreach Leaders serving with Umpqua Watersheds, in front of a map of the entire Umpqua Watershed, where they have coordinated hundreds of educational activities, programs, and outings throughout their service terms.



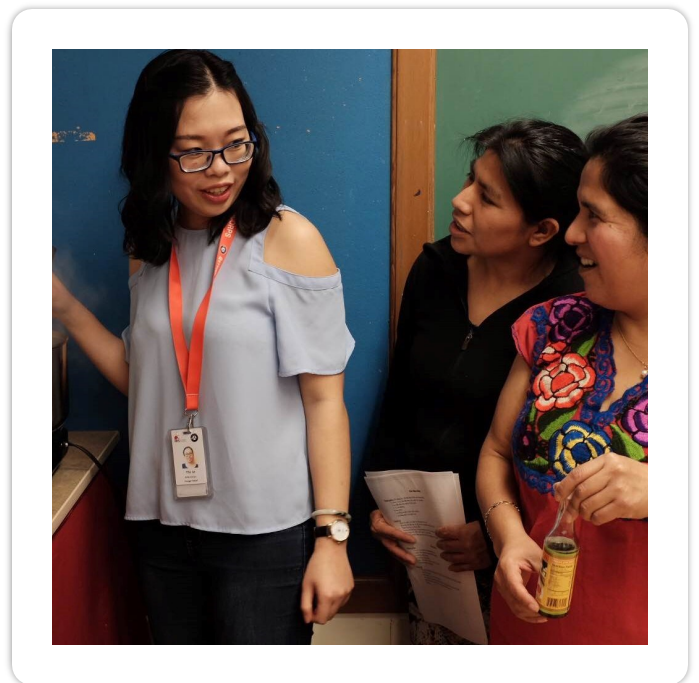
For their last week of service, they planned the Twin Lakes Campout to provide economically disadvantaged youth (ages 12 -17) an opportunity to explore in their own backyard in the Umpqua Valley.” - *United Community Action Network (UCAN) United Communities AmeriCorps (UCA)*

“The most memorable piece of my service has definitely been my Money Makers class with Greenway Elementary CAFE. It would be an understatement to say that when I first learned I would be leading the program, I was a bit uneasy.

In the end, not only did everyone have fun and learn a little about money and entrepreneurship, but you could tell that they had a sense of confidence and personal investment in their made-up businesses. It was as if they could at once see the possibility of creating a business one day with an air of "that's it?" while simultaneously beginning to grasp the complexities and largess of that "it."

Starting a business was a big job that required a lot of hard work and critical thinking. But it was also doable. After all, they had already done the hardest part in conceptualizing a place to start and where to move from there.”

- *Jeff, Economic Empowerment Metropolitan Family Service AmeriCorps Member*



MFS Hunger Relief AmeriCorps member, Thu, leads a healthy cooking class with parents from Earl Boyles Elementary, one of the service sites for MFS AmeriCorps members.

“After I left the trip, I thought about how I could use my service year to not only support the work that Metropolitan Family Service is doing to combat social isolation in older adults currently but also new ideas for new programs with the same goal in mind. I also want to emphasize that this is not a one-way interaction. One of the benefits of intergenerational engagement is that I get access to the wealth of knowledge that many of the older adults share with me.”

- *Alison, MFS AmeriCorps Member, on the impact of Intergenerational Engagement activities*

AMERICORPS RESPONSE TO COVID-19

In early 2019, as the COVID-19 pandemic began to surge, and states implemented shutdown orders to contain the spread, AmeriCorps programs across the country were heavily impacted. With the closure of most programs' service sites (*schools, parks, universities, public spaces, nonprofits*), programs had to quickly pivot to address these new challenges: establishing alternatives to in-person activities, providing opportunity for members to continue their service and maintain progress toward their education award, and addressing the existing and emerging needs of the community.

To provide additional flexibility for programs to respond in the wake of COVID-19, CNCS and Congress (via the CARES Act) enacted policy changes at the federal level, including: ¹¹

- Waiver of all match requirements for ASN cost reimbursement grants in FY2019 and FY2020
- Ability for members to receive a living allowance and benefits while they are suspended from service due to COVID-19
- Ability for members to receive a full Segal Education Award, if they are released from service due to COVID-19 after serving at least 50% of their required hours
- Encouragement to be flexible with collection of performance measure data

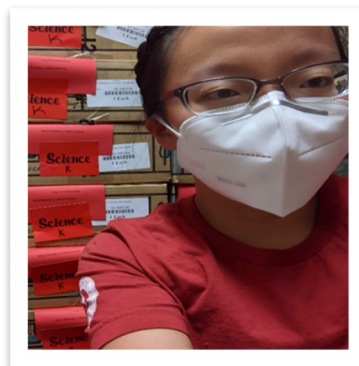
Despite the successful pivot to new projects, and serving in a virtual environment, programs report impacts are seen through a loss of capacity for partners to host members, consternation for members safety of high-risk populations, and have concern for continued impacts in the coming program year as the crisis continues. The conversation continues at the national level for how to address the impacts, while Oregon Volunteers will continue to engage other state agencies and partners to help support programs on the ground in Oregon.

On these pages: Showing their creativity, resiliency, and commitment to service, AmeriCorps programs and members in Oregon persevered to find meaningful and impactful ways to serve. The photos and stories here are just a few illustrations of how important AmeriCorps is as a resource for response and recovery during crisis and how members and programs have adapted to ensure they are still reaching those in need.



Metropolitan Family Service (MFS) members have continued to serve their communities through tele-service and physically-distanced projects.

(above) MFS AmeriCorps members Erin, Emily, and Adrienne serving at the Glenfair SUN food pantry. *(above right)* Second-year member, Andrea, with the Kindergarten science kits she helped create and distribute for her Cherry Park students as an at-home learning opportunity. *(right)* Casey, Ashley, and Annalena showing off Alder SUN food pantry items.



MEMBER IMPACTS



Partnerships for Student Achievement (PSA) and Ethos Rural Outreach members go virtual. (left) Team meetings and orientations are conducted online. (right) Rural Outreach Project member Grant giving music lessons online to Madras-Buff students in Madras, OR.



“Over the course of transitioning to distanced learning one student really showed his skills by bringing his grade up to an A. Working from home and without the distractions that can be found at school seemed to be an ideal fit for him. He not only got full scores on almost every project but he went into the final project with a lot of passion. The students had to design their own food trucks which is something that actually interests him. My experience with this student was a great example that different kids respond well to different teaching techniques.”

- PSA Member on their experience with a student since their service has gone virtual.

(left) Heart of Oregon AmeriCorps members, Tara and Austin, give the thumbs-up. (right) UCA Member Lydia at the Outpost Mobile Food Center which serves the most rural and inaccessible communities throughout Douglas County. (middle) Drawing by UCVEG member. (bottom left) Erik, HOC Corpsmember.



NATIONAL SERVICE PARTNERS

AmeriCorps State programs are not the only national service programs operating in Oregon. While state commissions administer the AmeriCorps State programs, AmeriCorps administers the other branches operating in communities across the country to address their most pressing challenges. United under the AmeriCorps identity, and operated out of regional offices, are **AmeriCorps National Direct** programs (multi-state), **AmeriCorps Seniors**, **VISTA**, **NCCC**, and the **Volunteer Generation Fund**. In 2019, the resources brought to Oregon by national service programs in total included 3,800 members at 500 service sites, and an investment of \$23.4 million dollars in federal and local funding. ¹²

AmeriCorps National Direct

AmeriCorps National Direct provides grants to non-profits, faith and secular community-based organizations, public agencies, Indian tribes, and institutions of higher education that engage AmeriCorps members in evidence-based or evidence-informed interventions/practices to strengthen communities. ¹³

AmeriCorps National Direct in Oregon

For program years 2018 and 2019, AmeriCorps National Direct projects placed 932 members at 263 service sites in Oregon. These members provided services in important focus areas such as: environmental education, housing, nutrition, education, youth services and healthy communities.



AmeriCorps Seniors

AmeriCorps Seniors

For decades, volunteers age 55+ have been making a difference in their communities through AmeriCorps Seniors programs. Each year, AmeriCorps Seniors engages more than 200,000 older adults in volunteer service through its Foster Grandparent, Senior Companion, and RSVP programs, enriching the lives of the volunteers and benefiting their communities. ¹⁴

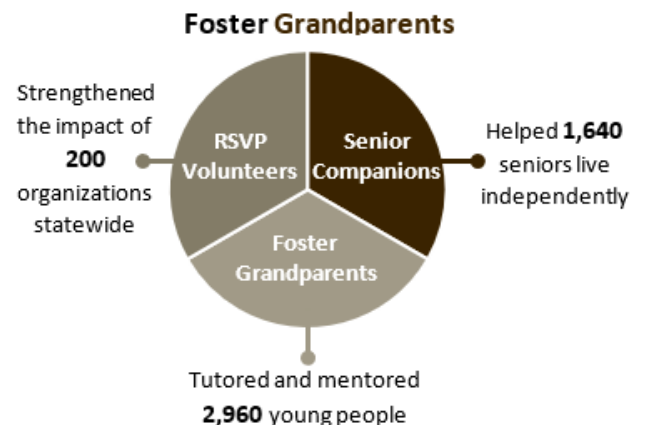
AmeriCorps Seniors in Oregon

Between 2018-2020, more than 6,200 AmeriCorps Seniors met

critical community needs while contributing to longer, healthier lives through one of three Senior Corps programs:

- ◆ **Foster Grandparents** serve one-on-one as tutors and mentors to young people with exceptional needs.
- ◆ **Senior Companions** help homebound seniors and other adults maintain independence primarily in their own homes.
- ◆ **RSVP volunteers** conduct safety patrols, renovate homes, protect the environment, tutor and mentor youth, respond to natural disasters, and provide other services.

In the two-year period, Foster Grandparents tutored and mentored 2,960 young people, Senior Companions helped 1,640 seniors live independently, and RSVP volunteers strengthened the impact of 200 organizations across the state.

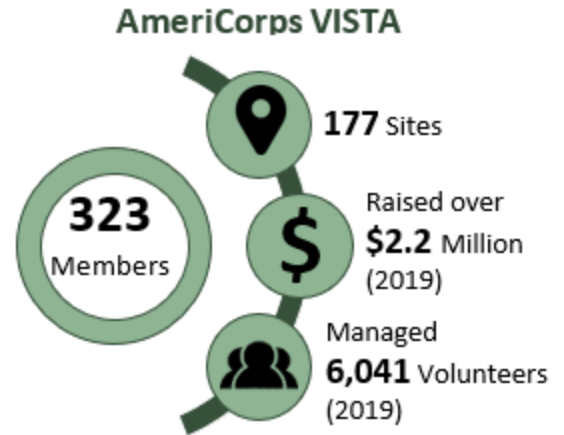


2018 & 2019 PROGRAM YEARS

AmeriCorps VISTA

AmeriCorps VISTA is the national service program designed specifically to fight poverty. AmeriCorps VISTA supports efforts to alleviate poverty by encouraging individuals from all walks of life to engage in a year of full-time service with a sponsoring organization to create or expand programs designed to bring individuals and communities out of poverty.

AmeriCorps VISTA members recruit and manage community volunteers, raise funds, and help manage projects. VISTA members support programs that improve academic performance, expand job opportunities, develop financial assets, reduce homelessness, and improve health services. They also support programs that increase housing opportunities, increase economic opportunities for low-income veterans and military families, and expand access to technology for those living in rural and urban areas of poverty across America. ¹⁵



AmeriCorps VISTA in Oregon

In 2018-20, AmeriCorps VISTA projects placed 323 members at 177 service sites in Oregon. In the last year, VISTA members recruited and managed 6,041 volunteers, and raised over \$2.2 million dollars to support and expand programs bringing people out of poverty.

AmeriCorps NCCC

AmeriCorps NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps) is a full-time, team-based residential program for 18-24 year-olds. Members develop leadership skills by serving in public safety, environment, and disaster projects. FEMA Corps, a unit of NCCC, focuses solely on disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. ¹⁶

AmeriCorps NCCC teams serving in Oregon are part of the Pacific Region Campus, operated out of Sacramento, CA. NCCC partners with local organizations to deploy members to work on a variety of projects in communities across the state. Below are the projects in Oregon for the 2018 and 2019 program years. Collectively, 224 dedicated members served with the Pacific Region AmeriCorps NCCC team, over the two-year period.

Project Partners, 2018-2020

- Sabin Community Development Corporation
- Oregon Parks and Recreation Department
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) - Region 10
- Upward Bound Camp for Persons with Special Need's Inc
- Northwest Youth Corps
- Marion-Polk Food Share
- The Environmental Center
- Malheur National Forest
- Wildlife Images Rehabilitation and Education Center
- Johnson Creek Watershed Council
- Bend Area Habitat for Humanity
- City of Eugene Parks and Open Space
- Josephine County Food Bank
- United Community Action Network
- City of Eugene Parks and Open Space
- Pacifica-A Garden in the Siskiyou
- Corvallis Environmental Center
- Wisdom of the Elders



AmeriCorps NCCC member, part of a team deployed to assist American Red Cross with wildfire response in Salem, OR.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Oregon Volunteers Commission is requested by ORS 458.568 (7) to provide within this biennial report recommendations for legislation deemed necessary to carry out the purpose of the Oregon Volunteer and Community Service Act or improve effectiveness or efficiency of the Commission.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the Commission are furthered when barriers to service are removed and supports are in place to ensure that participants achieve the maximum benefits of their service. In preparing this section of the report, Oregon Volunteers aims to raise awareness and educate on some of the challenges facing the national and community service network and the creative solutions that are being undertaken nationally to address them, and how they could benefit service in Oregon.

BACKGROUND

Oregon is a trailblazer in volunteerism and service across our diverse and multi-faceted communities. In addition to 25 years of AmeriCorps programs operating in Oregon, the state's volunteer efforts puts Oregon as third in volunteerism rates across the country.¹⁷ Despite these accomplishments, there are several critical ways Oregon can further support a culture of service, thereby multiplying our existing high-quality, impactful service opportunities.

Challenges:

- \$64.1 million in education awards have been earned in Oregon since 1994. \$33.48 million earned awards have been paid to Oregon institutions for educational expenses. State taxes on the education award can prevent members from accessing this important resource.¹⁸
- Oregon's high cost of living and housing are cost-prohibitive for members receiving a modest living allowance, leading to difficulties in recruitment and retention of members, and in some cases, members unable to find affordable housing in Oregon, resulting in homelessness and/or leaving their service year early.
- Nonprofits have a long road ahead in assisting their communities in response and recovery. AmeriCorps is an effective resource for increasing capacity of organizations. However, this opportunity can often be out of reach for smaller, rural and under-resourced organizations.

When Oregon invests in its future by addressing these challenges, Oregon has the opportunity to be an even stronger national leader by making the state more appealing to national and community service participants and organizations.

State Tax Exemption on Segal Education Award

Background: AmeriCorps members are participants in a national service program where they are paid a very modest living allowance/stipend. After completing their service year, they receive a small education award that can be used for tuition or to pay back student loan debt. In Oregon, this award is treated as taxable income—creating a burden for those who served communities across the state and a disincentive to those who are considering the program.

Solution: Exemption of Segal Education Award from Oregon State Tax

The education award is one of the greatest incentives for individuals to commit to a year of service with AmeriCorps; however, some members refrain from redeeming their award because of the tax burden. Exemption of the Ed award from state tax would make Oregon an attractive place for AmeriCorps members to serve and to stay to use their education award. This would also bolster AmeriCorps member recruitment and, in turn, increase the impact of the program in the state. Annually, in Oregon, approximately 900 AmeriCorps State & National and VISTA members serve in communities across the state, working hand in hand with local partners to address the community's most pressing needs. This service is invaluable to the state and knocking down these barriers would only help the program grow.

*(See: Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska)*¹⁹

State-Supported Service Corps Programs

Background: By federal statute, Commissions cannot operate AmeriCorps programs, and many smaller or rural nonprofits often do not have the resources to operate a full program, or partner with an existing one. State-funded service corps programs offer an opportunity for Commissions to address critical service gaps, and to connect underrepresented and underserved communities to the benefits of service and volunteerism, through placement of small state-supported teams to build capacity, and address unmet community needs.

CHALLENGES & SOLUTIONS

Solution: Establishment of a Commission Service Corps program.

State-funded service corps programs provide the state and Commission with the ability and flexibility to address state-specific focus areas and align with Governor priorities. Building on the successful program model of national service, state-funded service corps models allow states the flexibility to place members in underserved areas, provide additional career and life-skill pathways and opportunities, enable smaller, rural or underrepresented nonprofits the ability to utilize service as a tool to address community needs, have greater intentionality and leadership in addressing equity shortcomings within the state, and support focus areas outside of the national service focus area priorities. Other state examples include successful models such as climate action corps, disaster corps, health corps, and homelessness and housing corps. These models allow a commission to place members, offer a living allowance and provide an economic opportunity award for completion of service. Participation in such a program can also be a pathway to a future successful grant application for funding of an AmeriCorps program.

(See: Massachusetts Commonwealth Corps) ²⁰

State Tax Exemption on Living Allowance

Background: AmeriCorps members are participants in a national service program where they are paid a very modest living allowance intended to support their basic needs. Guidelines for the allowance are directly tied to a community's poverty rate, and allowed minimum/maximum limits set by the federal program. Due to federal rules, many programs cannot pay much more than the minimum. Even though the living allowance is not a wage, it is still subject to local and state income tax, meaning the modest amount is even less than members receive. This modest living allowance is often barely enough to cover monthly housing, food and transportation costs. In Oregon, especially, members cite difficulties in affording rent in the communities they are serving. Members often cannot sustain themselves without outside assistance during their service term and many enroll in public assistance programs to make ends meet. Members are not able to save money during their service term, and as such, are then unprepared to pay the taxes on their living allowance or education award. ²¹

Solution: Exemption of AmeriCorps Living Allowance from Oregon Tax

Exemption of the living allowance would have a significant positive impact on AmeriCorps members. The tax revenue only represents a small sliver of income for the state, whereas the effect on an individual with limited resources – like members serving in AmeriCorps – is life-altering. This would allow members to more successfully afford their basic needs, and potentially save the state money, by requiring fewer members to rely on public assistance. Removing the tax on the living allowance would make Oregon an attractive place for AmeriCorps members to serve and to stay and use their education award, all of which would be beneficial for Oregon's economy. This would also bolster AmeriCorps member recruitment and, in turn, increase the impact of the program in the state. Annually, in Oregon, approximately 900 AmeriCorps State & National and VISTA members serve in communities across the state, working hand in hand with local partners to address the community's most pressing needs. This service is invaluable to the state and being a leader in removing the tax on the living allowance would only help the program grow.

Increase to the Education Award

Background: AmeriCorps members are participants in a national service program where they are paid a very modest living allowance/stipend. After completing their service year, they earn a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award. The award may be used to pay educational expenses at eligible post-secondary institutions, including many technical schools and G.I. Bill approved programs, or to repay qualified student loans. The dollar amount of the education award is equal to the maximum amount of the U.S. Department of Education Pell Grant and may change year to year. In 2020, for a full-time member (minimum 1700 hours), the award is valued at \$6,195.

Solution: Increased Incentives to the Segal Education Award

Recruitment and access to higher education can be bolstered by investing state funds to increase the ed award to \$10,000 for each full-time member completing one year of AmeriCorps service. Since 1994, AmeriCorps alumni have earned more than \$3.3 billion in education awards, including \$1 billion to repay student debt. In Oregon alone, alumni have put \$33.5 million back into the state's educational institutions. Increasing the education award for national service members would increase recruitment and retention for programs, benefit our educational institutions, and retain talented and dedicated individuals within Oregon's workforce. *(See: California For All AmeriCorps Education Award)* ²²

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