

Pennsylvania State Service Plan 2008-2010

PennSERVE: The Governor's Office of Citizen Service
Partners:

Pennsylvania State Office of the Corporation for National and Community Service
Pennsylvania Department of Education
Volunteer Centers of Pennsylvania
Pennsylvania Campus Compact

This *Pennsylvania 2008- 2010 State Service Plan*, the successor document to the previously-submitted *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Unified State Plan 2002-2005*, the *Pennsylvania 2006 State Service Plan*, and the *Pennsylvania 2007-2010 State Service Plan*, reflects the strategy of PennSERVE: The Governor's Office of Citizen Service with regard to the coordination of national service and volunteer service activities across all streams of service in the state. Our goal is to ensure that all national service and volunteer service entities within the Commonwealth, including but not limited to our state commission, PennSERVE; the Pennsylvania State Office of the Corporation for National and Community Service; all Corporation grantees and stakeholders, including AmeriCorps State and National Direct programs; State Education Agencies; The Volunteer Center Network of Pennsylvania; Pennsylvania Campus Compact; and other volunteer service organizations within the state are communicating, cooperating, and collaborating.

This plan focuses particularly on the five strategic initiatives outlined in the Corporation for National and Community Service Strategic Plan 2006-2010, namely:

1. mobilizing more volunteers;
2. serving at risk youth and connecting them with service opportunities;
3. engaging students in communities;
4. using baby boomers' experience; plus the additional
5. disaster services.

For purposes of alignment, the format of this plan will mirror that of the Corporation for National and Community Service Strategic Plan 2006-2010, and will contain an Overview, Statement of Service Ethic, and five Focus Areas, culminating with a conclusion that seeks to address certain additional information sought by CNCS.

I. OVERVIEW: The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Unified State Plan 2002-2005 unveiled the following Mission Statement:

“To encourage, develop and facilitate volunteer and citizen community service which builds upon the talents, strengths, opportunities and challenges of people and communities in ways which enhance the quality of life for all citizens of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.”

It is our goal to set forth a strategic plan that will not only pursue this mission, but will move Pennsylvania national service initiatives to a new level of excellence.

One particular challenge, therefore, is the data presented in the Corporation for National and Community Service reports on “Volunteering in America: State Trends and Rankings,” from 2002 through 2007. These reveal a plateau, or in some cases a decline, in the number of Pennsylvanians who reported that they volunteer. It is the intention of this plan, its strategies and targets, to follow a course that will result in a steady increase in the number of Pennsylvanians who do, in fact, volunteer. Consistent with the “10 by 10” Initiative set forth by CNCS, Pennsylvania sets as a great and achievable goal a 15% increase in the number of its citizens who engage in volunteerism, by the year 2010.

II. STATEMENT OF SERVICE ETHIC: The guiding principles underlying this plan rely on the twin priorities of meeting critical needs through service and volunteerism, while at the same time developing an ethic of service and a lifetime commitment in those who serve. In this way, the capacity of communities, organizations, and individuals can be strengthened to provide the sustainable networks necessary to face life’s challenges.

In particular, Pennsylvania’s focus on recruitment, preparation, mobilization and coordination of volunteers and national service members, in response to the ongoing challenges that face our state, will provide the necessary infrastructure for timely and appropriate response in times of need. Resources and attention will continue to be directed across the Commonwealth to those areas, both urban and rural, most distressed.

We recognize the importance of partnering with key stakeholders, to align with their goals and to leverage limited resources, including human capital, and therefore seek greater inclusion and closer collaboration of government entities, federal, state and local; educational institutions, including colleges, universities, K-12 public and private schools, school districts and Intermediate Units, and pre-school and Head Start programs; non-profit service organizations; communities of faith; volunteer connector organizations; and business corporations.

III. FIVE FOCUS AREAS

While the strategies below are segregated for the purpose of aligning with focus areas, many, if not most, have been designed to be multifaceted and focused, maximizing the integration of partners and mission.

A. Pennsylvania Strategies: Mobilizing More Pennsylvanians to Volunteer

1. Pennsylvania recognizes that the optimization of volunteer mobilization requires a comprehensive and cohesive system, undoubtedly web-based. Having been thwarted in our effort to adopt the Points of Light Foundation model due to the POLF merger with Hands-On Network (described in last year’s State Service Plan), PennSERVE is seeking input from a wide variety of entities including the Corporation for National and Community Service, America’s Service Commissions, other state commissions, Volunteer Centers of PA, United Way member agencies, the Bonner Foundation, Higher Education consortia, and private enterprises, to identify an electronic system of volunteer recruitment, matching, and performance assessment which would meet the needs of a state as large and diverse as Pennsylvania in an affordable way. Until such system can be implemented, we will rely on the broadening of our network to include not only the usual suspects, but an increasing array of CBOs whose contact information is continually added to our distribution lists so as to facilitate communication regarding volunteer and service initiatives. Linkage with the soon to be unveiled PAVOLUNTEERING website, sponsored by the Volunteer Centers of PA, will increase our capacity to connect Pennsylvanians with volunteer opportunities. The major role of PennSERVE in statewide initiatives such as the Governor’s Stay Warm PA Energy Initiative, the America’s Promise-sponsored Dropout Prevention Summit, and the National Governor’s Association Policy Initiative regarding the Civic Engagement of Older Adults positions us as a connector organization better able to increase the state’s capacity to utilize volunteers.
2. Build on the success of the country’s largest Martin Luther King Day of Service, by using it as a springboard for sustained high impact volunteerism. Each year has seen an increase in the number of nonprofits participating in preparatory meetings, registering on the website, and undertaking service projects, and as a result, more volunteers have become engaged. PennSERVE will participate in the upcoming CNCS webinar in order to establish a Pennsylvania state account and to better utilize the “My MLKDAY” Project Registry and volunteer recruitment tool. King Day provides a unique opportunity to link potential volunteers, especially youth, with service organizations with which they were previously unaware. Sustainable interest

can then be cultivated. In the Greater Philadelphia area, the newest initiative to achieve this end is known as “MLK365.” Pennsylvania’s CNCS State Office Director, as the coordinator of the Atlantic region’s MLK Day activities, will serve as an invaluable resource for the 2009 event.

As we strive to link communities from one end of the Commonwealth to another in continuing Dr. King’s legacy, on January 19, 2009 and beyond, we strategically adopt inclusive state-wide themes with longevity emphasized. In 2008-2009, we are coordinating with the Governor’s Office on the Pennsylvania Stay Warm Initiative, promoting the theme of weatherization. By inviting the state and national direct AmeriCorps programs to participate in the Governor’s 7 regional energy summits conducted on October 14, 2008, we introduced them to the key players in their regions, and introduced or re-emphasized to those key players the value of AmeriCorps. Plans call for trainings prior to MLK Day, service projects on and after MLK Day, and environmental initiatives year-round. Since partners include the United Way of PA and its members, Home Depot and Lowe’s, programs are assisted in forming lasting collaborative partnerships. We also anticipate involving environmental nonprofits such as Energy Coordinating Agency and UCGreen, Pennsylvania Campus Compact and our own Scholars in Service to Pennsylvania AmeriCorps program for the participation of college students, Habitat for Humanity and YouthBuild regarding the construction of energy-efficient homes, etc.

PennSERVE’s monthly T/TA conference calls with programs emphasize this MLK Day involvement, and a comprehensive AmeriCorps training on the weatherization theme is scheduled for December 2008.

3. Following on the success of PennSERVE’s joint training with Volunteer Centers of PA in March 2008, we plan to organize a Pennsylvania cross-stream Volunteerism Conference to include CNCS-sponsored programs, Volunteer Centers and Hands-On Network affiliates, United Way of Pennsylvania and its member agencies, volunteer management organizations, DOVIAS, and community-based organizations to design a comprehensive state-wide strategy to improve the climate for volunteerism and to increase the number of Pennsylvanians who volunteer.
4. Investigate Hands-On Network Volunteer Impact, Retention and Expansion Grants as potential resource for coordinated volunteer generation strategy.

B. Pennsylvania Strategies: Ensuring a Brighter Future for all of Pennsylvania’s Youth, including serving at-risk youth and connecting them with service opportunities

1. Recruiting and supporting mentors for youth, especially in support of literacy. The strengthening of partnerships between AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs, especially *Experience Corps* and RSVP, and such organizations as BBBSA, Amachi, PA Mentoring Partnership, Pennsylvania Department of Education, and Head Start programs, has resulted in expanded initiatives such as *One Book, Every Young Child* program in collaboration with Pennsylvania Library Association. Similarly, PennSERVE was invited to participate in the 2008 Jumpstart/Starbucks *Read for the Record* in Pittsburgh.

A new goal being pursued as part of the NGA Public Policy Academy on Civic Engagement is the establishment of a *PA MentorCorps*.

2. Encouraging community volunteer participation in Days of Service sponsored by AmeriCorps programs and/or local governments, such as City-Year Serve-A-Thon (October 2008), Allegheny KEYS ServiceNation Service Day (September 2008) and Philadelphia Mayor Nutter’s Philadelphia Spring Clean-Up Day (April 2008) which introduces city youth to service opportunities.

3. Ensure that children of pre-school age are getting the support they need to enter school ready to learn. Jumpstart AmeriCorps program expansion to two sites in PA (University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh and Temple University, Philadelphia) resulted in collaboration with greater number of Head Start programs to provide meaningful kindergarten-readiness curricula.
4. Strategically select for grant funding and support those programs which have demonstrated success in engaging youth in at-risk and disadvantaged environments in meaningful service experiences. Includes expansion of AmeriCorps recruitment to neighborhoods and populations so-identified, through techniques such as outreach through VISTA network, school districts in at-risk areas, Pennsylvania Weed and Seed targeted communities.
5. Promote service-learning initiatives in collaboration with Pennsylvania Department of Education (21st CCLC, Project 720), Center for Schools and Communities, and the Institute for Global Education and Service Learning, together with college students recruited through Pennsylvania Campus Compact and the Scholars in Service to PA AmeriCorps program, enrollment in which is at an all-time high. Intentionally strategize to provide incentives for collaboration between 21st Century Community Learning Centers and higher ed institutions and volunteer centers, so as to increase the opportunities for community involvement in student success.
6. Participation of PennSERVE as a lead agency in the planning and staging of Pennsylvania's America's Promise Dropout Prevention Summit (November 2008) has appreciably strengthened the network of intermediaries and service providers. Major partners include Pennsylvania Department of Education, Pennsylvania Department of L&I Workforce Investment Board, Philadelphia Youth Network, Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, and Center for Schools and Communities; plus corporations such as State Farm Insurance Companies, AT&T and Verizon.

C. Pennsylvania Strategies: Engaging Students in Communities

1. Increase the number of college students/college age individuals who volunteer through the Scholars in Service to Pennsylvania AmeriCorps program; Pennsylvania Campus Compact; State and National Direct AmeriCorps programs, and other service learning and college based programs, in collaboration with the Institute for Global Education and Service Learning, PHEAA/AES, the Philadelphia Higher Education Network for Neighborhood Development, various school districts, and scores of nonprofit organizations which specialize in service-learning.
2. Increase the number of higher education institutions providing opportunities for meaningful civic engagement, by facilitating membership in Pennsylvania Campus Compact, promoting use of VISTAs on college campuses, supporting satellite Volunteer Centers and Hands-On Network affiliates on college campuses, and continual growth of Scholars in Service to Pennsylvania AmeriCorps program. Continue to encourage application for distinction on the *President's Honor Education Community Service Honor Roll*, and to recognize Pennsylvania colleges and universities so honored. Our 2008 celebration at PHENND 20th Anniversary Conference in Philadelphia recognized Pennsylvania as the state with the most Honor Roll selections.
3. Continue to emphasize state-wide platform to promote the value and importance of service on campus, provide information, and create opportunities for recruitment. Closer collaboration between Pennsylvania Campus Compact and Scholars in Service to Pennsylvania AmeriCorps program has resulted in greater coordination of efforts and programming such as outreach to senior citizens about PACE eligibility, MLK Day of Service initiatives around safety and weatherization. Enhanced efforts to encourage colleges to match education award (Pennsylvania now has two such higher ed institutions); offer increased service opportunities to work-study students; and provide financial assistance for students engaged in service.

4. In celebration of National and Global Youth Service Day, soliciting from school superintendents and administrators, college and university presidents, as well as elected officials, (several of whom submitted nominations) recognition of importance of civic engagement among students, creation of opportunities for service activities, and nomination of youth whose exceptional service merits consideration as PennSERVE High School and College Youth Commissioners. Similar strategy for Presidential Freedom Scholarships, Pennsylvania School Board, perhaps U.S. Public Service Academy.

D. Pennsylvania Strategies: Harnessing Baby Boomers' Experience

1. PennSERVE will serve as the leader for the Pennsylvania National Governor's Association Public Policy Academy on the Civic Engagement of Older Adults. Directed by the Governor's office, in cooperation with the Department of Aging, the Department of Administration, the Department of Labor and Industry, AARP, ExperienceWave, and a host of nonprofit and corporate partners, we seek to value and promote the involvement of Pennsylvanians 50+ in the dynamism of our communities, by enhancing opportunities for service and volunteerism, life-long learning, and employment.

In this way we will expand upon strategies previously implemented, such as outreach to government, unions and businesses to employees nearing the ends of their chosen careers to consider next-stage planning.

Recognition of national service as a viable expression of civic will, utilization of experience, and potential financial support in the face of future economic challenges facing this generation of retirees.

2. In connection with National Family Volunteer Day, in partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Aging and nonprofit organizations such as Cradles to Crayons, and in fulfillment of the Governor's pledge to improve the quality of life for seniors, engage in media and public relations outreach to encourage family, intergenerational volunteerism.
3. Secure commitments from Pennsylvania businesses to expand employee volunteer programs; including collaboration with local Chambers of Commerce to sponsor recognition events. Using the Lehigh Valley and Volunteer Center network as a model, host Spirit of Service Awards to honor such businesses and provide replication models.
4. Develop cross-stream plans aimed at allowing more Pennsylvania seniors to live independently, including enlisting baby boomers as Senior Companions, providing weatherization to homes consistent with the Governor's *StayWarm* initiative and in furtherance of Home Depot/United Way of PA/AmeriCorps collaboration to provide training, supplies, AmeriCorps members, and volunteers to winterize homes across the Commonwealth. Implementation of blanket collection drive involves Senior Corps, corporate partners, and scores of nonprofits.

E. Pennsylvania Strategies: Disaster Services

1. In partnership with PEMA and the EMAs in Pennsylvania's 67 counties, develop a comprehensive plan for deployment of members of CNCS- supported programs to assist in local disasters that includes preparation/training, information dissemination, communication and leadership to mobilize citizens to respond effectively to disasters. Several Volunteer Centers already have strong disaster preparedness programs, and are leaders in their local VOADs.

Toward that end, a March 2008 AmeriCorps Program training was conducted in collaboration with the Volunteer Centers of Pennsylvania, with presentations by servepa and PEMA.

2. Raise awareness across state of AmeriCorps resources in event of disaster. PennSERVE has required each AmeriCorps program to designate two staff and two national service members each year as its disaster response personnel. Those individuals must undergo CERT training, usually coordinated through the local Emergency Management Agency. Next year's plan will take this to the next level, and programs will be expected to communicate to their local Red Cross agencies, community partners, VOADs, educational institutions, etc. regarding their expertise in the field. AmeriCorps programs are uniquely positioned in the event of an emergency, not only due to the CERT training, but as a result of their ongoing community involvement and ability to mobilize volunteers.
3. Replicating models employed in previous years, we are planning self-help and train-the-trainer weatherization workshops designed to ensure that Pennsylvanians will not be placed at risk in the event of disasters such as ice storms, electrical failures, and other winter hazards. A planned MLK Day of Service project will involve equipping weatherization kits to allow people to make their homes more energy-efficient and preserve precious heat, which will be distributed to vulnerable populations.
4. Utilize service-learning initiatives such as the Youth Organized for Disaster Action grant awarded to the Institute for Global Education and Service Learning to provide collaborative opportunities with Pennsylvania Department of Education, e.g. presentations at PDE Conferences (e.g. 2008 Extra Learning Opportunities Conference) and at schools; local legislators and community partners through outreach by the students; and with police, firefighters and EMTs.

IV: CONCLUSION

This plan has been developed through an open, collaborative process to provide for maximum participation and input from national service programs within the state and the major partners listed above.

Implementation of the plan is ongoing, and challenges with regard to providing open lines of communication in a state as large and diverse as Pennsylvania will abound. While we understand (with disappointment) that financial support to facilitate collaborative meetings is unavailable, it is our hope that CNCS may provide manpower and technical expertise for the scheduling and conducting of remote teleconferences, web-based communication, data collection apparatus, and information about the successes of states across the nation that may prove replicable. Continued access to T/TA providers through the CNCS contracts is invaluable. And, while a high-quality experience at the National Conference on Volunteerism and Community Service is always important, it becomes crucial when, as in 2007, the conference was held in our home state. Fortunately, it was a huge success.

Pennsylvania is fortunate to have so much national service talent within its borders, and collaboration occurs both naturally and strategically. PennSERVE's AmeriCorps Launch each year invites AmeriCorps members from the state, national direct, and VISTA programs to gather together in an atmosphere of camaraderie and civic engagement to begin the service year by taking the AmeriCorps pledge in unison and devoting themselves to getting things done in a spirit of collaboration. Representatives from each of the named collaborative partner entities, CNCS, the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Volunteer Centers of PA, and the Pennsylvania Campus Compact engage as active members of the PennSERVE Advisory Board. Not only do policies such as these lead to the sharing of ideas across streams of service, better use of resources and increased sustainability, they create and perpetuate an atmosphere of mutual respect, and an unparalleled gestalt, that inure to the benefit of all Pennsylvanians.