

## Volunteer Iowa (Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service)

[www.volunteeriowa.org](http://www.volunteeriowa.org)

Quarterly Report:

*January 1 – March 31, 2024*

### **AmeriCorps State and National:**

- AmeriCorps Week was celebrated March 10-16, 2024. AmeriCorps Week honors the valuable contributions of all AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers who pledge to “get things done” for Iowa and the nation. Volunteer Iowa and our programs recognized the week by sharing stories on social media and recognizing members for their service. With more than 6,700 individuals serving at 800 local service sites in Iowa, it’s important to acknowledge the impact these members and volunteers have on our state and country.
- Volunteer Iowa is in the process of reviewing grant applications for our formula grant award process. Grant reviewers consist of Volunteer Iowa Commissioners and peer reviewers. Organizations new to AmeriCorps programming can apply for a planning grant to develop successful and sustainable AmeriCorps programs. Existing AmeriCorps programs apply annually to continue to receive AmeriCorps funding from the Commission.
- Volunteer Iowa applied for private funding through the Schultz Family Foundation to receive a Youth Mental Health Corps planning grant. If awarded, planning grant activities would support the development of youth-focused mental health training for the Community Health Worker pathway within Volunteer Iowa’s existing Iowa Community Corps, a Public Health AmeriCorps program, operated by HHS’ Division of Public Health.

### **AmeriCorps Seniors (including RSVP and Foster Grandparents)**

- Volunteer Iowa was notified that the renewal application and continuation application for AmeriCorps Seniors Retired and Senior Volunteer Program grants were awarded across Iowa maintaining current coverage in 2/3 of Iowa counties. These programs supported by both federal and state funds, manage thousands of volunteers providing transportation to medical appointments, meals and other appointments, delivering meals to seniors, work in food pantries teaching exercise classes and partnering in schools. These grants include direct support by Volunteer Iowa HHS programming in 14 counties supporting.
- Volunteer Iowa’s Senior Demonstration Program partners with 14 youth-serving organizations, including K-12 schools, early learning center, and mentoring organizations, in six urban and rural counties. There are currently volunteers age 55+ actively serving 50 youth directly and 280 youth indirectly. Volunteers serve an average of 10 hours a week with children. Volunteers provide one-on-one support to children with exceptional needs through mentoring and tutoring. This quarter focused onboarding three new volunteers in Polk and Pottawattamie counties. Additionally, volunteers resumed monthly trainings such as brain health, youth self-esteem, and serving youth with special needs.

### **AmeriCorps VISTA:**

- Twenty-four VISTA members serve with sixteen nonprofits across the state. Project focus areas include developing plans for disaster preparedness for Iowa seniors, creating mentor programs for youth, supporting programming and increasing resources for vulnerable Iowans, supporting immigrant and refugee populations in eastern Iowa, and addressing critical mental health issues.

**Commission Business:**

- Volunteer Iowa Day at the Capitol was held on February 1, 2024. Program participants, board members and staff participated both in person and virtually. Volunteer Iowa programs, partners, and commissioners informed legislators about the impact of Volunteer Iowa programs in their communities.

**Disaster Response:**

- Volunteer Iowa facilitated a statewide webinar on online systems, disaster preparedness, and continuity of operations following a disaster. Meetings have been held with five county emergency management teams across the state to discuss and review county spontaneous volunteer management plans. Mental health resources are being compiled to better support members in their service and on disaster response.

**Iowa MENTOR, the Iowa Mentoring Partnership:**

- **Youth Mentoring:**
  - National Mentoring Month: Along with MENTOR, the National Mentoring Partnership, over 70 local mentoring programs celebrated by recruiting new mentors and honoring current matches. 2500 mentor recognition certificates from Governor Reynolds were distributed to mentors across the state. The Governor signed a proclamation declaring January as Mentoring Month in Iowa.
  - Some Iowa youth mentoring programs saw a 15% increase in mentor inquiries due to a series of “Become a Mentor” radio spots on Iowa Public Radio and Radio Iowa during the month of January.
  - Iowa MENTOR attended the 2024 National Mentoring Summit where two Iowa youth mentoring programs shared their success stories nationally. Iowa MENTOR received the credential Master Trainer in Mentoring. This qualification strengthens Volunteer Iowa’s capacity to offer self-awareness trainings to mentoring program partners as well as a variety of youth serving organizations across the state.
  - Iowa MENTOR program partners increased in program coverage by six counties. Iowa MENTOR now covers 66 counties across Iowa: bringing quality mentoring and well-being practices to more communities, youth and families.
  - With the Volunteer Generation Fund grant, Iowa MENTOR continues to assist four Iowa school districts with the creation of mentoring programs set to begin in August 2024.
  - Iowa MENTOR welcomed five new youth mentoring program partners and six organizations are receiving intensive consulting services to strengthen their program to align with evidence-based practices.

**Training:**

- **Volunteer Engagement Training Program:** The six-part series of volunteer engagement webinars was held January through March. Through a partnership with the Volunteer Centers of Iowa, the program makes consistent, high quality volunteer engagement training available statewide.
- **Service Enterprise:** This research based, change management process trains organizations to effectively leverage the skills of volunteers to meet their mission. A new statewide virtual cohort has launched with five organizations. Additionally, a dozen organizations are currently working on their accreditation or reaccreditation through this program.
- **City Volunteer Engagement Initiative:** A multipart training and coaching series with implementation funding for cities to develop volunteer engagement strategies launched in March. Participating cities include Cedar Falls and Waterloo.

**Volunteer Generation Fund:**

- Volunteer Iowa was awarded an additional American Rescue Plan (ARP) Volunteer Generation Fund Grant to support the creation of service-learning and youth mentoring programs in schools. Requests for Proposals for sub-grants were released in March, with grants expected to be awarded by July.

**Volunteer Recognition:**

- ***Iowa Volunteer Hall of Fame and Excellence in Mentoring Awards:*** The 2024 Iowa Volunteer Award Ceremony will take place on April 30<sup>th</sup> at the Capitol, honoring the 2024 Hall of Fame Inductees and the 2024 Excellence in Mentoring finalists Profiles of this year's inductees, ceremony information, and photos will be available on our website: <https://www.volunteeriowa.org/hof>
- ***Give Back Iowa Challenge:*** The Give Back Iowa Challenge will kick off on April 1 with an invite to employers to participate. Volunteer Iowa provides recommendations for at volunteer opportunities to registered businesses.
- ***Governor's Volunteer Awards:*** GVA nominations will close on April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024, with five regional ceremonies being planned for the summer.

**Youth Service & Service-Learning:**

- ***Service-Learning:*** Five school districts (Waterloo Community Schools, CAL Elementary Schools, Sioux Center Community Schools, Hamburg Community Schools, and Central Lyon Community Schools) completed three service-learning projects per school, totaling 15 completed projects involving 236 students committing 510 hours of service. Additionally, 121 educators received training on service-learning. Grantees participated in Volunteer Iowa led trainings on inclusivity in service and youth voice. All grantees expressed interest in continuing the project into year two.
- ***Youth Service Boards:*** Volunteer Iowa awarded 13 nonprofits \$3,000 each to create Youth Service Boards. Each Board will incorporate youth ages 5-25 years old who will be tasked with planning and executing a service project on September 11<sup>th</sup> Day of Service. Service projects must engage an additional 50 individuals, mainly youth, in service to promote increased volunteer engagement. Each service project will be entirely youth-led and provide youth voice and leadership in nonprofits across the State of Iowa.