

Volunteer Iowa (Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service)

www.volunteeriowa.org

Quarterly Report:

January 1 – March 31, 2025

AmeriCorps State and National:

- AmeriCorps Week was celebrated March 9-15, 2025. 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 7,500 individuals serving at 700 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.

AmeriCorps Seniors: RSVP

- Volunteer Iowa is awaiting notification on new and continuation applications for AmeriCorps Seniors Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) grants. 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, working in food pantries, teaching exercise classes and partnering in schools. These grants include direct support by Volunteer Iowa HHS programming in 14 counties.

AmeriCorps VISTA:

- Sixteen VISTA members currently serve with twelve nonprofits across the state. Project focus areas include developing plans for disaster preparedness for Iowa seniors, increasing participation and matches for youth mentor programs, supporting programming and increasing resources for vulnerable Iowans, supporting immigrant and refugee populations and addressing critical mental health issues.

Commission Business:

- Volunteer Iowa Day at the Capitol was held on February 5, 2025. 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.
- One additional commissioner was appointed to fill a seat that had been vacated mid-term.

Disaster Response:

- Volunteer Iowa facilitated an in-person Volunteer Reception Center (VRC) training in January with 18 attendees from across the state. Ongoing meetings continue with emergency management teams to discuss and review county spontaneous volunteer management plans. A comprehensive mass care and sheltering assessment is underway to enhance HHS’s capabilities in responding to an emergency.

Iowa MENTOR, the Iowa Mentoring Partnership:

- Along with MENTOR National, over 70 local mentoring programs celebrated National Mentoring Month in January by promoting youth mentoring, recruiting new mentors and honoring current matches. Iowa MENTOR ran a series of radio ads throughout the month to encourage adults to sign up to serve as a youth mentor.
- Iowa MENTOR received training on the fifth edition of the Elements of Effective Practice on Mentoring (EPEM). This edition highlights the importance of parent/guardian engagement, program staff training, funding sustainability, and data collection and evaluation.
- An emphasis on youth belonging will be the one outcome all Iowa MENTOR program partners will strive towards this year. Iowa MENTOR will create ways program partners can help their organization, mentors and mentees feel welcome, valued, and safe.
- Iowa MENTOR certified four new mentoring program partners this quarter. Iowa Jobs for America's Graduates (iJAG), Girls Rock! Des Moines, Project Bridging and Girls, Inc. Sioux City. All 25 chapters of TeamMates in Iowa are now a part of Iowa MENTOR, increasing our program coverage to 81 counties.
- All mentoring programs in Iowa have joined the national database called the Mentoring Connector which is designed to connect volunteers who would like to mentor with their school district mentoring program.
- With the Volunteer Generation Fund (VGF) grant, Iowa MENTOR continues to assist four Iowa school districts with the creation of mentoring programs.

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. Additional organizations are currently working on their accreditation or reaccreditation through this program.

Volunteer Recognition:

- ***Iowa Volunteer Hall of Fame and Excellence in Mentoring Awards:*** The 2025 Volunteer Iowa Awards Ceremony will take place on April 24th at the Capitol, honoring the 2025 Hall of Fame Inductees and the 2025 Excellence in Mentoring awardees. Profiles of this year's inductees, ceremony information, and photos will be available [on our website](#).
- ***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 volunteer opportunities to registered businesses.
- ***Governor's Volunteer Awards:*** The Governor's Volunteer Awards (GVA) nominations will close on April 30th with a statewide ceremony being planned for the summer.

Youth Service & Service-Learning:

- With the Volunteer Generation Fund, Volunteer Iowa continues to support five school districts in establishing service-learning programs within their classrooms.
- Volunteer Iowa trained 61 organizations on youth service and youth service-learning through partnership with the Iowa Rural Development Council and our ongoing service-learning training series.
- Five organizations launched their mini-service-learning projects through funding from Volunteer Iowa. Projects are expected to be completed this summer, engaging an estimated 275 youth in service.

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- Volunteer Iowa awarded ten nonprofits \$3,000 each to create Youth Service Boards for year two of Volunteer Iowa's Day of Service grant. Each board will incorporate youth ages 5-25 years old who will be tasked with planning and executing a service project on the September 11th 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.