



Volunteer Iowa (Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service)

Quarterly Report:

July 1 – September 30, 2025

AmeriCorps:

The new AmeriCorps program year began in September. Across the 18 AmeriCorps State programs in Iowa, more than 750 members will serve in organizations throughout the 2025-2026 program year.

Two grants from the Schultz Family Foundation are expanding service activities and access to national service. One of the grants provides eligible AmeriCorps member's financial support if an unexpected expense could create a barrier to continued AmeriCorps service. The other grant is a Youth Mental Health Corps implementation grant, awarded after a planning grant year. This provides resources to Volunteer Iowa to support the development of two service-to-career pathways in the field of youth mental health community health workers and school mental health peer navigators. Volunteer Iowa is working with 4 AmeriCorps programs to train and host Youth Mental Health Corps members.

Commission Business:

Monica Chavez-Silva was elected Commission Chair, along with Ray Haas as Vice Chair. Dan Koster was re-appointed to chair the Volunteer Engagement Committee. Tim Jacobsen will serve as chair for the Programs and Development Committee. Dawn Roberts, Kevin Koester, and Dan Cataldi completed their service with the commission on June 30, 2025. Graci Zeiger, Kevin Clay Brown, and Molly Gosselink were appointed to the Commission July 1, 2025.

Disaster Response:

Completed the Volunteer Reception Center (VRC) "Get Connected" training program with the Story County RSVP program, which will strengthen local emergency response capacity and expand our trained volunteer network. More in-depth trainings are planned in the fall with this team.

Partnered with Poweshiek County Emergency Management and Iowa State University Extension to host a disaster preparedness workshop, identifying disaster response partners within Poweshiek County. A lead VRC team with follow-up training is scheduled for fall delivery.

Participated as a panelist at the Iowa Disaster Human Rights Council (IDHRC) Annual Conference, presenting lessons learned and best practices from VRC operations during the Greenfield disaster response to enhance statewide emergency protocols.

Established improved communication systems within Iowa HHS to strengthen multi-agency coordination, enabling faster volunteer deployment and more effective disaster response service delivery to Iowa communities.

Iowa Mentoring Partnership (Iowa MENTOR):

The Iowa MENTOR Leadership Council, established and convened in August, is composed of certified mentoring program partners from across the state representing community, school, and site-based programs. The Council builds shared leadership, elevates program voices in strategic decisions, and strengthens partnerships to ensure statewide mentorship sustainability. Iowa MENTOR continues to develop a hope-centered framework grounded in the Science of Hope. This quarter, we launched trainings on the fifth edition of the [Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring](#), with 15 to 18 programs participating in monthly virtual sessions to unpack each element for practical application. The National Mentoring Resource Center (NMRC) continues to award Iowa MENTOR funds as a technical assistance provider, supporting programs in need of in-depth development, structure, operations, and sustainability assistance; currently, there are four approved requests. In addition, Burlington Community School District's Club M Mentoring Program successfully completed recertification, and Iowa MENTOR welcomed six new program partners.

RSVP

Volunteer Iowa issued contracts to provide state funding to support 18 organizations providing RSVP programming to 65 Iowa counties. The RSVP program engages individuals ages 55 and older in volunteer service to address community needs and to provide high quality volunteer experience that will enrich the lives of volunteers.

Training

Volunteer Iowa staff provide targeted trainings at the start of each program year. Topics covered this fall include National Service Criminal History Check Overview, AmeriCorps Recruitment Plans, AmeriCorps Budget Development, Data Collection, Progress Reporting and Federal Financial Management.

9/11 Day of Service Grant

In July, upon reinstatement of previously terminated funds, nine organizations chose to continue participation in this year's Day of Service. Supported by an AmeriCorps grant, these organizations applied to participate in initiatives that equipped nonprofits with the tools, training, and funding needed to enhance their capacity by leveraging volunteer talent and culminated in 9/11 Day of Service project that mobilized volunteers in meaningful service projects that addressed local needs and priorities. A variety of events were held on and around September 11th, with projects ranging from planting bulbs, updating and cleaning gardens and facilities, organizing physical and mental wellness community days, creating third spaces for youth, recognizing first responders, hosting a community clean-up day and educating seniors on digital skills.

With the shortened timeline to plan a day of service, two programs who completed the Service Enterprise training sessions chose not to participate; however, they are still pursuing Service Enterprise accreditation.

VGF ARP Mentoring Grant

The third and final year of the Volunteer Generation Fund (VGF) American Rescue Plan (ARP) Mentoring Grant began in September 2025. Carlisle Community School District, Cedar Valley Catholic Schools, Columbus High School, Dike New Hartford Community Schools and Hamburg Community Schools have grown their mentoring programs to support their community and strengthen the lives of K-12 students.

Over 200 volunteers supported these programs during year two. The mentoring programs range from strengthening academics and addressing truancy to career exploration and mental health. The four programs will prepare for certification with the National Quality Mentoring System and end the year as certified program partners of Iowa MENTOR. Year three is focused on continuing to strengthen the mentoring programs, while working towards sustainability through community partnership and program infrastructure.

Service-Learning

Year three of the Volunteer Generation Fund (VGF) American Rescue Plan (ARP) Youth Service-Learning grant began in September. The five K-12 public schools continuing on to year three of the grant include Hamburg Community Schools, Waterloo Community Schools, CAL Elementary, Sioux Center Community Schools and Central Lyon Community Schools. This final year will focus on establishing community partnerships to support service-learning sustainability and expanding the program to more classrooms through additional teacher professional development. Since the program began, over seventy service-learning projects have engaged over 3,700 volunteers in 9,400 hours of service.

Volunteer Iowa's Empowering Youth Service grantees are in the process of completing youth-led service-learning projects. Three of the five programs have completed their projects, with the other two programs wrapping up projects this fall. Projects began earlier this year following a training series that launched in the fall of 2024. Of the three completed projects, over 191 youth ranging from upper elementary to college age led service-learning projects within their communities.

AmeriCorps Seniors

Volunteer Iowa continues to grow its Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), including starting new Pen Pal programs in Cass, Pottawattamie, Woodbury, Monona, Harrison, Mahaska and Poweshiek counties. New volunteer transportation programs have been started in Cass, Poweshiek and Mahaska counties. RSVP has added 143 new volunteers this quarter.

AmeriCorps VISTA

In September, Volunteer Iowa received a federal grant from AmeriCorps to operate a statewide VISTA program to research, create, and expand programming for eligible public and nonprofit organizations to utilize service as a strategy to further their mission. The intent of the VISTA program is to support programming that helps alleviate poverty for the many Iowans that struggle to find adequate housing, transportation, health and mental health services, and much more. This is the nineteenth year Volunteer Iowa has received this funding. Currently, there are five VISTAs serving the following organizations: NAMI Southwest Iowa, Hope to Shine, Independence School District, Corinthian Baptist Church and the Des Moines Police Department. The grant allows for up to 32 VISTAs to serve and we are looking forward to enrolling more VISTAs in service throughout the year, focused on alleviating poverty and building capacity of public and nonprofit organizations.