



# STATE SERVICE PLAN 2016-2018

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# Volunteer Florida

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**Our Mission:** Volunteer Florida strengthens Florida's communities through national service, fostering volunteerism, and leveraging resources.

**Our Vision:** Floridians are engaged, communities are transformed, and Florida is a better place to live.

### INTRODUCTION

Volunteer Florida was created by Executive Order of the Governor in 1993 and established in Florida Statute by the Florida Legislature in 1994 to administer AmeriCorps funding in Florida. Administratively housed in the Executive Office of the Governor, Volunteer Florida administers \$31.7 million in funding for 45 grantees across Florida, including \$10,644,214 in federal grants from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and \$9,352,803 in local match.

Since its inception in 1994, Volunteer Florida's mission has evolved to serve as the state's lead agency for volunteers and donations before, during, and after disasters as well as serving as the state's primary advocate for volunteerism and community service. Volunteer Florida works closely with CNCS, our subgrantees, emergency management partners, other state agencies, elected officials, non-profits, and countless others to carry out this mission in Florida.

### STATE SERVICE PLAN BACKGROUND

The purpose of this plan is to synthesize recommendations from Volunteer Florida's many partners, as well as Volunteer Florida's Strategic Plan for the future, so that we can maximize opportunities for service in a collaborative way.

Volunteer Florida drafted a comprehensive three-year Strategic Plan in 2013 to guide the agency's activities. The State Service Plan uses the Strategic Plan as a framework while also incorporating feedback and input from stakeholders across the state.

Volunteer Florida has the unique role and obligation to: promote national service and volunteerism; administer high-quality programs; prepare communities to be more disaster-resilient; and connect with partners who can multiply our reach and impact. This State Service Plan aligns Volunteer Florida with its state partners so that together, we can

increase sustainability and leverage new resources. In sum, this plan builds on the foundation we have built with our partners over the years to present our collective vision for volunteerism, community engagement, and national service in Florida.

## PROCESS

Volunteer Florida worked with the CNCS State Office, AmeriCorps Program Directors, Florida Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (FLVOAD) and other emergency management partners, the Volunteer Florida Commission, the Volunteer Florida Foundation Board of Directors, and the Florida Association of Volunteer Resource Management (FAVRM) to compile recommendations to improve service and volunteerism in Florida. Volunteer Florida also made presentations to stakeholder groups to collect feedback. Volunteer Florida collected feedback throughout 2015 by utilizing a survey, which was completed by 71 partners representing the following types of organizations: national service partner, 47.9%; volunteerism partner, 22.5%; emergency management partner, 5.6%; and other, 23.9%. A full list of respondents is as follows:

- Adventist University of Health Sciences
- AmeriCorps Gadsden Reads
- AmeriCorps Polks Read
- Area Agency on Aging
- Barry University
- Big Brothers Big Sisters – AmeriCorps Reads
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of St. Lucie, Indian River & Okeechobee Counties
- BRACE
- Branches, Inc.
- Centro Campesino Farmworker Center, Inc.
- Children's Home Society of Florida
- Christian HELP/CFJI
- City of Coral Springs
- City Year Jacksonville
- City Year Orlando
- City Year Orlando
- Communities In Schools
- Communities In Schools of Florida
- Communities in Schools of Miami

- Community Action and Human Services Department Retired and Senior Volunteer Program
- Community Tampa Bay
- Department of Elder Affairs
- Dr. Piper Center for Social Services, Inc.
- Elder Care Services, Inc.
- Flagler Sheriff's Police Athletic/Activities League
- Florida Baptist Children's Homes
- Florida Campus Compact
- Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church
- Florida Conservation Corps
- Florida Department of Environmental Protection
- Florida Department of Health – Bureau of Preparedness & Response
- Florida International University
- Florida Reading Corps
- Florida State Parks
- Forgotten Coast Cultural Coalition
- Foster Grandparent/Senior Companion Director at the Council on Aging of West Florida, Inc.
- Goodwill Industries Big Bend
- Guardian ad Litem
- HandsOn Jacksonville
- Heart of Florida United Way
- Heart of Florida United Way
- IMPOWER
- Lightner Museum
- Martin Volunteers, United Way of Martin County
- Miami Dade County CAHSD Foster Grandparent Program
- Nature Coast Volunteer Center
- NWF Environmental Stewards
- Operation AmeriCorps
- Pinellas Opportunity Council, Inc./RSVP
- Pines of Sarasota
- Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)
- RSVP of Highlands County
- RSVP of Highlands County

- RSVP of Lee County
- RSVP of St. Johns County
- Sarasota County School District
- Seminole County Public Schools
- Stetson University
- Take Stock in Children
- Teach For America
- United Way Lee, Hendry, Glades, and Okeechobee
- United Way of Escambia County
- United Way of Marion County
- University of Florida Center for Leadership and Service
- University of Miami
- Volunteer Florida
- Volunteers for Community Impact
- Westminster Winter Park
- Women of Tomorrow
- YMCA of the Suncoast

### **SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

The majority of survey respondents described the following priority areas for volunteer service efforts as “urgent” or “extremely urgent”: environmental stewardship, education, economic opportunity, healthy futures, disaster services, capacity building, and veterans/military families.

**Respondents shared the following regarding the most pressing needs facing their agencies and/or communities:**

- Disaster apathy
- Using local volunteers effectively in the long-term recovery phase of disaster
- Low reading level and test scores
- High drop-out rate
- Homelessness, poverty, and low income
- The protection of Florida’s unique natural and cultural resources

Respondents also stated that “all can be addressed through service and volunteerism.”

**Volunteer Florida asked how we can assist to mobilize local resources, including public and private funding, to improve community outcomes. Respondents shared the following:**

- Contact existing volunteers and voluntary agencies in a disaster-affected community to give them specific ways to help
- Have a representative from Volunteer Florida to speak on a legislative level
- Provide opportunities for the sharing of resources and strategies
- Provide access to results of quasi-experimental research showing program impact in order to mobilize local resources
- Create a statewide database to connect assets with needs between all stakeholders in our communities
- Raise public awareness about community needs and how local resources
- Support AmeriCorps in all Florida public schools
- Provide local educational and instructional opportunities on how to identify and access public and private financial resources
- Build political will and awareness about the importance of an excellent education
- Build non-profit organizational capacity with the goal of reducing poverty
- Provide additional services to the veteran population

**Volunteer Florida asked for examples of other ways that Florida can engage more people in volunteering or national service to meet pressing community needs.**

**Respondents shared the following:**

- Assist students in grade promotion and completing high school
- Increase public and media exposure, highlighting the need for volunteers (e.g., recruitment campaigns, public service announcements, awareness, and recruitment events)
- Integrate service more in to K-12 curricula, particularly in ways that align students' academic and career interests with specific community needs
- Provide hands-on training for Community Engagement Directors/Volunteer Managers, etc. that would teach practical approaches and best practices
- Establish a group of Floridians who are willing and able to commit to major gift fundraising in times of major disaster
- Reach out to those who are relocating to Florida to retire to engage them in service
- Provide non-monetary incentives for volunteering

## STRATEGIC FOCUS

Volunteer Florida continues to support schools, nonprofits, and faith-based organizations by administering AmeriCorps and other national service grants. Eighty-nine percent of funding is targeted toward mentoring, tutoring, and other education-based programming, reflecting the priorities of both the Corporation for National and Community Service and the Executive Office of the Governor.

Other programs address critical issues, including the environment and veterans' services; many of these longstanding AmeriCorps programs have established a pipeline to public service careers while meeting specific, measurable outcomes.

Volunteer Florida is also the state's lead agency for volunteers and donations before, during, and after disasters. Building upon lessons learned following Hurricane Andrew and the active 2004-2005 hurricane seasons, Volunteer Florida regularly trains governmental and nongovernmental organizations across Florida to utilize volunteers and manage donations for disaster relief. Volunteer Florida's emergency managers are routinely deployed for FEMA activations across the U.S., and also help communities within the State of Florida and across the country to be better prepared through national conferences, trainings, and publications.

Moreover, Volunteer Florida promotes volunteerism and community service in Florida. Volunteer Florida has supported counties' efforts to establish volunteer centers across the state and continues to work with the Florida Association of Volunteer Resource Management to further equip nonprofits and organizations so that they can maximize volunteer impact. Recognition events, including the Florida Champion of Service Awards and Florida Volunteer Month, raise awareness about volunteers' impact, with the goal of inspiring others to engage in service.

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Based on survey respondent recommendations and the Volunteer Florida Strategic Plan, Florida will use its resources and partnerships to fulfill the strategies outlined in this plan.

### **GOAL 1: STRENGTHENING FLORIDA'S COMMUNITIES**

As local and state government leaders continue to turn to national service and volunteerism to address critical needs, Volunteer Florida and our partners will ensure that we are well-positioned to meet those demands with opportunities to serve. We will also

continue to develop a network of partners trained to recruit and retain skills-based volunteers. Volunteer Florida's mission – to strengthen Florida's communities through national service, fostering volunteerism, and leveraging resources – is only possible by engaging long-standing partners. We will continue to work together to make Florida's communities smarter, safer, healthier, and stronger through volunteerism and national service.

Objectives:

- We will strive to build sustainability for all programs and grantees through increased support, training, and technical assistance.
- We will engage grantees to leverage additional volunteers to address critical community needs.
- We will facilitate a thorough grants management process, including outreach/education, technical assistance, assessment, and feedback to applicants.
- We will work to streamline the grant process for current and potential grantees so that we can bring more resources to Florida.
- We will support efforts to encourage the use of national service and volunteerism to create economic opportunities, support veterans, enhance education, strengthen disaster services, and provide job training.
- We will strive to increase the number of Competitive, State, and other AmeriCorps grants made available to Florida.
- We will continue to work to support and assist the establishment of Volunteer Centers in counties in need, as well as supporting current Volunteer Centers.
- We will engage Floridian peer reviewers to provide key feedback and guidance to the national service grant funding process.

## **GOAL 2: INCREASE PROMOTION OF VOLUNTEERISM AND NATIONAL SERVICE THROUGH STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS**

Volunteer Florida will facilitate the growth of partnerships that will inspire more Floridians to serve and provide additional opportunities to serve. Our goal is to sustain volunteerism and national service in Florida for years to come. We can only do that if we work in collaboration with a diverse alliance of service-oriented organizations in Florida, including, but not limited to, CNCS, current grantees, emergency management partners, other state agencies, elected officials, non-profits, VF leadership, and Volunteer Centers.

## Objectives:

- We will continue to create additional strategic partnerships.
- We will build the capacity of partners across the state so that they can serve more Floridians.
- We will promote corporate philanthropy to engage the business community in service.
- We will clearly and effectively illustrate the importance and return on investment of volunteering and service to existing and potential partners.
- We will continue to coordinate community events to share the positive impact of national service and volunteerism.
- We will seek innovative opportunities, such as the #BringABook service project, to introduce new audiences to volunteerism and increase awareness.
- We will identify and work with corporate partners in Florida that are dedicated to philanthropy and community service.
- We will equip Commissioners, VF Foundation board members, partners, and subgrantees with marketing materials to ensure they are effectively advocating for national service and volunteerism.
- We will continue to distribute and share information about the organization on social media to reach out consistently to a variety of networks, including national service partners and community organizations.
- We will seek out opportunities to work with the Executive Office of the Governor to recognize outstanding volunteers for their service.
- We will encourage, promote, and participate in annual events that promote volunteerism and national service, including the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service, 9/11 Day of Service and Remembrance, AmeriCorps Week, and Florida Volunteer Month.

### **GOAL 3: CONNECTING FLORIDIANS TO OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERVICE**

Volunteer Florida will work with our partners to provide clear connections between Floridians who want to serve and volunteer/national service opportunities. We will use every achievable platform to facilitate service and educate Floridians about the many opportunities to serve in their communities or across the state. This includes national service, volunteerism, and emergency management.

Objectives:

- We will continue to promote and enhance skills-based volunteering in Florida.
- We will partner with state agencies to promote volunteerism.
- We will work with partners, such as FAVRM and Florida's Volunteer Centers, to develop and deliver excellent training programs for leaders and managers of volunteers annually. These may include AmeriCorps Program Directors trainings, skills-based volunteers trainings, convenings, Excellence in Volunteer Management Training, or joint trainings.
- We will continue to support FAVRM by participating in regional forums to promote collaboration, networking, and new volunteer opportunities.
- We will invest additional funds in the Volunteer Services Department to increase outreach and engage volunteers across the state.
- We will partner with CNCS and other stakeholders to conduct joint presentations to educate organizations about different funding streams for capacity building and to promote volunteerism and service.
- We will continue to work with partners to identify and reach out to organizations that would benefit from national service funding.

**GOAL 4: INCREASING FLORIDA'S DISASTER RESILIENCY**

Volunteer Florida seeks to ensure that all of Florida's counties are better equipped to manage and utilize volunteers and donations in a disaster. As the lead agency for donations and volunteers before, during, and after disasters, Volunteer Florida's Emergency Management Department works every day to serve our many partners across the state and the nation.

Objectives:

- We will provide or organize training for government, non-government and private sector organizations on disaster volunteer and donations management.
- We will mobilize, connect, and deploy resources to assist communities responding to and recovering from disaster.
- We will continue to develop, formalize, and sustain new partnerships with cities and counties, national service organizations, community and faith-based organizations, and civic and educational organizations to expand our service capabilities to more Floridians.

- We will promote mitigation activities to partners as a strategy to engage volunteers in emergency management year-round.
- We will operate the ESF-15 (Emergency Service Function) and deploy trained Volunteer Florida staff to assist the Florida Division of Emergency Management if necessary.
- We will facilitate annual convenings of community organizations to maximize resources and collaborate more effectively to meet the disaster-related needs of individuals and families.
- We will work with partners, such as the Division of Emergency Management, to educate the public about the effective role of volunteers and the use of donations in responding to and recovering from disasters.
- We will support Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) staffing disaster requests through VF and government agency partner personnel.
- We will require disaster resiliency elements into all applicable AmeriCorps programs.
- We will convene ESF-15 partners in annual hurricane exercises and other appropriate forums.
- We will take advantage of all feasible opportunities to update technology and systems for the Volunteer and Donations Hotline and the Florida Donations Portal.
- We will recruit new partner agencies and work to maintain existing partnerships.

## **SUSTAINABILITY**

Volunteer Florida has identified the need to diversify funding so that we can maximize service opportunities in Florida. Additionally, Volunteer Florida will work with our partners to seek new and innovative avenues for funding.

The Volunteer Florida Foundation, a Direct Support Organization established by Volunteer Florida, provides significant financial assistance to Volunteer Florida. These funds support Volunteer Florida programs, allowing the agency to leverage new private funding to support and promote volunteerism in Florida. As a result, Volunteer Florida leverages \$32 in non-state funding for every dollar of state funding received. In addition to supporting Volunteer Florida's primary programs, the Foundation is the sole entity responsible for fiscal support, administration, and oversight of the Florida Disaster Fund, providing long-term recovery assistance to families and businesses following a disaster. The Florida Disaster Fund also leverages corporate giving to support disaster survivors.

Our goal is to guide Volunteer Florida and its partners toward a sustainable, thriving future.

### **CLOSING**

Volunteer Florida's framework incorporates a triple bottom line impact for the State of Florida: First, AmeriCorps members and volunteers gain job skills and the possibility for a college scholarship. Second, partners such as nonprofits, foundations, and schools increase their capacity to serve Floridians. Third, veterans, seniors, job-seekers, and others receive critical services. As a result, Florida is smarter, safer, and stronger.

These outcomes are made possible because of our partnership with the Corporation for National and Community Service. Volunteer Florida is grateful for this longstanding partnership and continued support from CNCS.

Volunteer Florida is also grateful for the feedback of those who submitted recommendations for the development of this plan. We look forward to continuing to work with our partners to advance service and volunteerism across Florida in a collaborative, meaningful way.