Volunteer Tennessee 2023-25 State Service Plan

(revised 10/20/23)

Background:

Federal law provides that State Commissions, such as Volunteer Tennessee, must prepare a national service plan for the State that: is developed, through an open and public process; covers a 3-year period; includes measurable goals and outcomes for the State national service programs in the State; ensures outreach to diverse community-based agencies that serve underrepresented populations; provides for effective coordination of funding applications submitted by the State and other organizations within the State under the national service laws; is updated annually; ensures outreach to, and coordination with, municipalities (including large cities) and county governments regarding the national service laws; and contains such information as the State Commission considers to be appropriate or as AmeriCorps may require. In addition, federal law provides that the State shall work with appropriate State agencies and private entities to develop a comprehensive State service plan for service by adults aged 55 or older.

Based on input gathered from stakeholders, the Volunteer Tennessee commission developed the following Tennessee State Service Plan.

I. Goals

Strategic Goal 1: Increase food security. *(Responsibility: Communications Committee, Grants Committee, Strategic Partnerships Committee)*

> **Outcome 1:** Increased awareness of available resources within communities.
> > **Outputs:**
> > 1.1. Each year at least one (1) program includes one (1) food security performance measure. *(GC)*
> > 1.2. Number of volunteers leveraged toward this end for food security issues will increase by 5% year over year. *(CC) (GC) (SPC)*

1.3. VT programs increase the number of people served related to food security resources with a 5% increase year over year. *(CC) (GC)* **Strategic Goal 2: Improve educational outcomes.** *(Responsibility: Communications Committee, Foundations of Service Committee, Grants Committee, Strategic Partnerships Committee)*

> **Outcome 2:** As determined by performance measures, 50% of youth served by Volunteer Tennessee education programs will show improvement in 2023; 52% in 2024; and 54% in 2025.
> > **Outputs:**
> > 2.1. Each year at least one (1) program includes one (1) education performance measure. *((GC)*
> > 2.2. Volunteer Tennessee education programs serve at least 30,000 youth each year. *(FoSC) (GC)*

Strategic Goal 3: Improve statewide economic and workforce development. *(Responsibility: Foundations of Service Committee, Grants Committee, Strategic Partnerships Committee)*

> **Outcome 3.1:** Maintain or exceed 90% retention of AmeriCorps members each year.
> > **Outputs:**
> > 3.1.1. Maintain or exceed 1,000 AmeriCorps members serving. *(GC) (SPC)*
> **Outcome 3.2:** As determined by performance measures, 60% of individuals served by Volunteer Tennessee economic opportunities or workforce development programs will show improvement in 2023; 62% in 2024; and 64% in 2025.
> > **Outputs:**
> > 3.2.1. Each year at least one (1) program includes one (1) economic opportunity or workforce development performance measure. *(GC)*
> > 3.2.2. The number of people accessing resources will increase by 5% each year with the baseline of 8,500. *(FoSC) (GC)*

3.2.3. The number of volunteers leveraged for economic opportunity and workforce development will increase by 5% year over year. *(GC) (SPC)*

Strategic Goal 4: Increase access and opportunity so that AmeriCorps and traditional volunteer opportunities are open to all persons. *(Responsibility: Board Development Committee, Strategic Partnerships Committee)*

> **Outcome 4.1:** 90% of trainees will show an increase in DEI awareness as indicated by pre/post assessments.
>> **Outputs:**
>> 4.1.1. Each year at least one (1) program includes one (1) Diversity Equity and Inclusion performance measure. *(BDC)*
>> 4.1.2. Annually, Volunteer Tennessee Commission members and staff, program staff, and AmeriCorps members will complete 1 DEI training and pre/post assessments. *(BDC)*
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> **Outcome 4.2:** By 2025, increase the diversity (may include race, color, ethnicity, nationality, religion, socioeconomic status, veteran status, education, language, age, gender, gender identify, sexual orientation, mental or physical ability) of the population of AmeriCorps members from the 2021-22 baseline.
>> **Outputs:**
>> 4.2.1. Work with staff recruitment specialist to develop plan to increase diverse participation in National Service in Tennessee. *(GC) (SPC)*

Strategic Goal 5: Increase community resilience and public safety through community emergency preparedness education and facilitation of volunteer disaster response and recovery efforts in Tennessee. *(Responsibility: Board Development Committee, Foundations of Service Committee)*

> **Outcome 5.1:** Increased participation in emergency preparedness education/training from baseline of year one (2023).
>> **Outputs:**
>> 5.1.1. At the end of two years, Volunteer Tennessee will have provided Emergency Preparedness training opportunities for the Volunteer Tennessee commissioners, Volunteer Tennessee staff, and Volunteer Tennessee's sub-grantee's staff/members. *(BDC)*
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> **Outcome 5.2:** Increased disaster recovery and response volunteer opportunities (e.g., through TN Serves, Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)) from baseline of year one (2023).
>> **Outputs:**
>> 5.2.1. At the end of three years, at least one (1) program includes one (1) emergency preparedness and community resilience performance measure. *(FoSC)*
>> 5.2.2. At the end of three years, each sub-grantee should have an emergency preparedness plan for their program. *(FoSC)*

Strategic Goal 6: Volunteer Tennessee associated programs will see improvement across performance. *(Responsibility: Foundations of Service Committee, Strategic Partnerships Committee)*

> **Outcome 6.1:** 60% of AmeriCorps members and 50% of beneficiaries show a positive change in attitude toward civic engagement.
>> **Outputs:**
>> 6.1.1. Team Tennessee AmeriCorps programs will, on average, maintain at least 90% member retention rate over three years. *(BDC) (CC) (GC) (SPC)*
>> 6.1.2. Programs supported by Volunteer Tennessee will recruit 123,000 volunteers who serve 143,000 hours for 2022-23; 126,690 volunteers who serve 147,290 hours for 2023-24; and 130,490 volunteers who serve 151,709 hours for 2024-25. *(FoSC) (SPC)*
>> 6.1.3. Programs supported by Volunteer Tennessee will serve at least 42,000 individuals for 2022-23; 42,840 individuals for 2023-24; and 43,697 individuals for 2024-25. *(FoSC)*

6.1.4. Increase number of disadvantaged and underrepresented youth participants [FSC – in AmeriCorps programs] by 5% each year from baseline of year one (2023). *(SPC)*

Outcome 6.2: 100% of programs supported by Volunteer Tennessee will meet their pledged match each year. *(BDC) (CC) (GC) (SPC)*

II. State Service Plan for Adults Age 55 or Older

Adults who are 55 years or older are healthier, more active and more assertive information seekers than generations of the past. If offered interesting and rewarding opportunities to help their communities, they will help to shore up faltering government and community resources. From a labor perspective, this population may be divided into three basic groups: 1) those who will retire and stop working earlier than their full Social Security retirement income eligibility, 2) those who will work to the age of full Social Security retirement income eligibility and then retire and, 3) those who will continue to work beyond their full Social Security retirement income eligibility age. In a strong economy, more people will be inclined to retire early, but in a weak economy, as is the case at present, more will decide to stay in the workforce longer just to make ends meet. An October 2008 Local Employment Dynamics report from the Census Bureau indicated that adults age 55 and older made up over 28% of the Tennessee workforce. This same report showed that these older workers were primarily concentrated in rural areas of the State; however, several metropolitan areas showed high rates of increase in the number of older workers.

The enormous increase in the number of older workers brought about by the "aging-in" of the Boomers is creating a glut of job-seekers for relatively few paying positions. According to information provided by the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development, older workers will make up a higher proportion of the 2016 workforce, and approximately 75% of State employees are within 5 years of retirement. Paying positions are available, but competition to get those is stiff. A September 2009 American Community Survey Report from the Census Bureau indicated that 38.6% of 65-and-older workers in Tennessee worked full-time, year-round in 2008. Boomers looking for jobs are likely to be open to a variety of non-traditional "employment" configurations, provided that each offers some type of useful compensation. An example would be the pairing of older, experienced workers with younger workers for mentoring – the mentoring could be reciprocal, with the older person sharing skills acquired over decades of work in the same or a similar field with the younger worker and the younger worker helping the older one understand and navigate newer technology and methods of communication. Older workers who become less able to do strenuous physical work could benefit from learning new skills by working with younger people. Acceptable forms of compensation might include money, the exchange of goods or services, or opportunities for networking, new experiences or new learning.

According to Dr. Jim Powers, Chief of Geriatrics at the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Nashville, some of the benefits for older workers in the work force include income, community engagement, mentorship of younger workers, an active and healthier lifestyle, and increased longevity. Some of the pressures that keep them in the work force include Social Security income that is inadequate to retire, low savings rate of US workers, financial requirements of caregiving for children/grandchildren, need to retain health insurance that would otherwise be unaffordable, and previous loss of pension/other work place retirement benefits.

(A) Recommendations for policies to increase service for adults age 55 or older, including how to best use such adults as sources of social capital, and how to utilize their skills and experience to address community needs:

Volunteer Tennessee recommends investigating the following policies to increase service for adults age 55 or older:

1) Policies that will engage adults to serve more in the roles of health and food security;

2) Policies encouraging senior technology training and senior technology programs that tap into the vast resources of wisdom, experience and knowledge present in our aging baby boomers. The benefits to society are enormous to have volunteer consultants, trainers and coaches available online in a variety of fields, and the engagement can only be good for the physical, emotional and social health of the older volunteers.
3) Policies that will assist older adults in finding volunteer opportunities that best fit their interests, including through the Tennessee Serves portal.

(B) Recommendations to the State agency on aging:

Rather than making recommendations to the Tennessee Commission on Aging on these issues, Volunteer Tennessee believed that a more appropriate approach was to seek recommendations from the Commission on Aging on ways that Volunteer Tennessee can support the Commission on Aging's existing goals related to marketing and outreach. The Commission on Aging developed these recommendations:

(i) The Commission on Aging and Disability (TCAD) will develop a marketing outreach plan for dissemination to businesses statewide for the dual purpose of raising awareness among the general population about 1) the programs and services offered by the State's Aging and Disability network and about 2) the ever-increasing population of older adults generated by the "aging-in" of the Baby Boomer generation and the need for volunteers to help that population remain independent for as long as possible. TCAD will partner with chambers of commerce, large corporations, locally owned businesses, civic and fraternal groups, corporate retirement organizations, and other types of businesses to assure a thorough saturation of the business sector with the message that both services and opportunities to help are available for older adults. TCAD will ask businesses to partner with the Aging and Disability network on an ongoing basis to collaboratively address solutions to the problems that the older adult population will encounter.

The current Aging and Disability network offers many services through programs that operate primarily through the generosity of volunteers. Volunteers who are committed to the work are, however, very difficult to find and/or nurture. TCAD and the Aging and Disability network would greatly benefit from education and ongoing support from Volunteer TN to learn how to retain good volunteers and not only recruit and train them. The programs that utilize the services of volunteers are: Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program – volunteers are trained to serve in long-term care residential settings to advocate on behalf of residents; Public Guardianship Program – volunteers are trained to work with court appointed public guardians to assist individuals who are physically and/or mentally incapacitated and who, because they have no one to help them, are provided guardians, or conservators, by the courts; the Nutrition for the Elderly Program – volunteers are trained to deliver meals to older adults or those with disabilities in their homes and/or to assist with meal preparation at congregate meal sites, and the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) – volunteers are trained to provide counseling to consumers about Medicare and other related health insurances. Each type of volunteer utilized by the network is different and the responsibilities range from taking meals into consumers' homes to helping a public guardian manage the checking account of a consumer under conservatorship to helping a consumer access health insurance coverage for a needed medication. Volunteers from the business sector could share their various skills to enhance the capacity of many of the programs of the Aging and Disability network.

Senior Centers are, per the Older Americans Act of 1965, to serve as community focal points for services and programs for older adults. Baby Boomers prefer not to be referred to as "seniors," so the concept surrounding senior "centers" must be re-worked. Members of the business community age 55 and older will be recruited to share their knowledge and skills in a variety of ways, including working with center directors to help them with strategic planning and in developing their own marketing and business plans. Engaging those nearing retirement age in the planning of the future for older adults in Tennessee makes good sense and could help to assure ongoing support to that population.

By educating the business or corporate sector about the needs and concerns of older adults, it may be possible to engage that sector in providing monetary, in-kind and/or volunteer support for the older adult community. Through collaboration with businesses, TCAD could create a program similar to the "Adopt a School" or "Adopt a Highway" programs wherein businesses would sponsor activities or programs for older adults. The exchange would be company recognition and acknowledgement through whatever activities, items or programs the company helped support.

(ii) TCAD will establish a system of ongoing outreach to non-profit agencies/organizations, the State Department of Education, the network of public and private colleges and universities in Tennessee and other State agencies for the purpose of disseminating information about the availability of services for older adults through the Aging and Disability network and for volunteer recruitment. Outreach could take the form of presentations to State agencies, newsletters highlighting program accomplishments, volunteers and the need for volunteers being distributed via e-mail and hard copy mailings to non-profit agencies, articles and advertisements placed in other networks' newsletters, and ads and articles in local community and college newspapers. TCAD could partner with the State Department of Education for distribution of information through the statewide public school system and could, also, create new and promote existing intergenerational programs to include students and older adults, such as the Foster Grandparent Program.

(C) Recommendations for civic engagement and multigenerational activities:

To encourage civic engagement and multigenerational activities, Volunteer Tennessee recommends:

1) Using adults 55 and older coupled with college students and high school students (e.g. Tennessee Scholars) to address community problems through service-learning projects. Such a combination could provide for outstanding civic engagement opportunities and pass on new and reflective responses on behalf of all parties as they work together to meet service project work. Mentoring would take place and allow for the exchange of experience and career/workforce dialogue from both parties.
2) Developing a wide range of volunteer opportunities for adults that are highly skilled in their fields and who want to create change and make an impact in their communities.
3) Increase awareness of the ability for AmeriCorps members, who are at least 55 years old at the start of service, to transfer an earned Segal AmeriCorps Education Award to a child, stepchild, grandchild, step-grandchild, or foster child.

(D) Recommendations for encouraging the development of Encore service programs in the State.

To encourage development of Encore service programs in the State, Volunteer Tennessee recommends:
1) Further support and investigation of ongoing discussions with other State Commissions on the possibility of a National Direct AmeriCorps Encore program. Such a program would allow placement of Encore members in rural communities and meet the needs of those communities by conducting activities such as financial literacy, housing placement assistance, and volunteer recognition as a means of increasing volunteerism to meet community needs in general.
2) Support for potential senior technology programs (as mentioned in (A)2) above) that would combine volunteers 55 and older with school students (K-16) working in service-learning contexts to serve communities and underserved individuals in high need of digital training and access.