



State Service Plan 2020-2022

ServeOhio empowers local communities to mobilize AmeriCorps and community volunteer resources to meet their most challenging needs. Since our inception in 1994, ServeOhio has invested more than \$195 million dollars in AmeriCorps and other state, federal and private funds in Ohio's communities. In that time, over 35,000 Ohio residents have served as AmeriCorps members, providing 56 million hours of service and earning education awards totaling \$118.2 million.

ServeOhio presents this state service plan for 2020-2022. Per 45 CFR 2550.80, state service commissions are charged with developing an actionable 3-year comprehensive national and community service plan to establish state priorities relative to national service and volunteer engagement. This plan serves as a blueprint to leverage Ohioans' energy and commitment to solve local problems. Charting the course for volunteers and AmeriCorps members is a core function of state service commissions like ServeOhio.

With extensive outreach, ServeOhio conducted a survey of Ohioans. We received 605 responses, representing citizens from every region in the state. The results reflect the strength of Ohio's communities and the many ways Ohioans contribute:

Ohioans want to do more. A majority of surveyed Ohioans volunteer in more than one way for more than one organization. The data and opinions shared show that Ohioans seek even greater involvement in local problem solving. "More civic engagement! We can solve any problem," one person reported.

Ohioans volunteer in large numbers. When asked, "What do you do to make a difference, volunteer, serve others or contribute to your community?", **72%** of respondents offered detailed examples. In fact, only *five percent* of Ohioans checked the option, "I don't volunteer."

Citizens support ServeOhio's mission. **95%** of respondents agree with this statement: "I support the work of ServeOhio to engage AmeriCorps members and volunteers to solve local, state and national problems."

No matter where you live in the state, people are helping people. **Volunteer rates are consistently high** across the regions of Ohio and are the same, whether you live in a rural community or one of our towns, suburbs or cities.

Section 1: ServeOhio's Strategic Goals

ServeOhio's mission calls for us to mobilize AmeriCorps and volunteer resources to strengthen communities across the state. These goals will focus our efforts and build partnerships to solve local problems. The plan is built with these principles in mind:

Alignment: ServeOhio is committed to aligning traditional volunteer engagement with AmeriCorps resources as needed to create agile solutions and expand civic engagement statewide.

Breadth: To have the greatest impact, ServeOhio will reach as many people and jurisdictions as possible. ServeOhio seeks meaningful volunteer and service impact in every part of Ohio.

Capacity: ServeOhio supports communities and organizations in a number of ways, from training to providing funding, which builds the capacity to solve problems.

Development: With ServeOhio's programs functioning at a high level (and statewide compliance targets met), ServeOhio is in a position to build new programs, and test new models and ideas.

As we've learned, Ohioans from all walks of life and parts of the state are working every day to build safer, healthier communities. The State Service Plan is organized around this ideal: service and volunteerism can impact many problems, including mending our social fabric. A survey respondent who lives in a small town in Southwest Ohio related, "I try to make my community more unified...conflicts divide my community, which prevent those in need from getting the resources and support they need."

There are many ways to build upon our strengths to build a better Ohio. This State Service Plan is organized around four goals: state, local, program and citizen level goals.

Goal 1: Build service and volunteer strategies to respond to the most pressing needs across the state.

Volunteers are force multipliers. ServeOhio is a link between the Governor's priorities and volunteers in every community. An investment in volunteerism and service provides the "boots on the ground" to achieve these goals:

- Investing in Ohio's Children and Families
- Investing in Ohio's Most In-Need Children
- Investing in Ohio's Schools, Colleges and Universities
- Investing in Ohio's Natural Wonders
- Investing in Ohio's Workforce and Innovation

Objectives:

1A. Secure more funds for Ohio and our service programs to solve local problems.

- Increase support for service and volunteer solutions across the state.
- Increase the number of programs funded through the AmeriCorps Competitive grant process.
- Explore alternative funding mechanisms for ServeOhio and our partners.

1B. Partner with other State Agencies to create interventions to achieve administrative priorities.

- Create and support volunteer opportunities for all Ohioans who want to serve.
- Support state and local agencies to recruit and engage volunteers in support of their missions.
- Build and sustain partnerships with state entities in the development of AmeriCorps programming that directly address administrative priorities.

Goal 2: Support and expand local volunteer opportunities to solve local community issues.

Ohioans seek local solutions to local problems. Organizations who first work with ServeOhio in small ways (mini grants, conference attendance) often come to partner in bigger ways (Skills-Based Volunteering and AmeriCorps planning and operational grants.) With fewer volunteer centers at work in the state, ServeOhio is committed to encouraging civic engagement. ServeOhio is in a position to secure Volunteer Generation Funds, and to develop and communicate volunteer opportunities that fit the local community.

Service and volunteerism are tremendous force multipliers in our communities. ServeOhio is at the heart of this effort, but no one can do it alone. Together we can accomplish more, and ServeOhio cultivates strategic partnerships to get things done for the entire state.

Objectives:

2A. Cultivate local partnerships, specifically in areas of need.

- Work to fill gaps in volunteer infrastructure and AmeriCorps programming, particularly in areas with fewer AmeriCorps members and no lead volunteer mobilization entity.
- Build upon the Skills-Based Volunteer Initiative pilot and capitalize on places and settings where it is most successful.

2B. Pursue regional and local funding sources for blended service and volunteer interventions.

- Explore the creation of regional capacity-building AmeriCorps program(s).
- Mine citizen survey data for gaps and opportunities; work with local community groups, leadership and funders to explore regional-based interventions that could bring service and volunteer resources to underserved areas.

Goal 3: Improve existing systems to support AmeriCorps program quality and sustainability.

ServeOhio's AmeriCorps portfolio is the fulcrum of our state service plan. For 25 years, national service has provided a transformational impact on the State of Ohio with remarkable efficiency. ServeOhio will continue to address issues statewide, with AmeriCorps programs as the centerpiece of our work.

Objectives:

3A. Identify and cultivate potential AmeriCorps grantees.

- Mine the citizen survey data for local and regional issue area priorities and potential partners.
- Conduct specific outreach to target interventions and identify potential grantees.
- Identify organizations to serve as conveners and funders for regional or statewide programs; develop potential intermediaries to administer AmeriCorps and other programs for smaller community organizations.
- Address barriers to applying for and managing an AmeriCorps grant.

3B. Increase AmeriCorps program quality and sustainability.

- Reduce regulatory burden on grantees; work with grantees to identify inefficiency and redundancy.
- Look into cross-program similarities and resource sharing to increase efficiency and effectiveness in the measurement and evaluation of impact.
- Increase amount and percentage of program expenditures; allocate all of ServeOhio's funding and resources effectually.

3C. Maximize member recruitment, retention and a high-quality member experience.

- Continue ServeOhio's work to build morale, provide training, establish clear expectations, and create cross-program leadership opportunities.
- Support development of positions that feature: leadership opportunities, local engagement, member agency and autonomy.
- Expand ServeOhio's role in recruiting AmeriCorps members statewide.
- Explore ways to provide enhanced financial support for AmeriCorps members.
- Continue LeaderCorps Program development.

Goal 4: Increase citizen service and volunteerism across Ohio.

Across the state, Ohioans express an interest to do more. They prefer local solutions to local problems, but they want to share ideas and resources with others. Results from the survey show a strong consensus that the State Service Plan include steps and resources to *strengthen local efforts to drive local solutions*.

Objectives:

4. Launch a call to service for all Ohioans.

- Develop and implement volunteer engagement systems, including a statewide portal for volunteer opportunities; utilize social media and other communication channels to reach as many potential volunteers as possible.
- Expand volunteer management training and technical assistance opportunities to help organizations build their capacity to recruit and utilize volunteers in an effective manner.
- Increase ServeOhio outreach and projects, particularly in underserved areas.
- Build and sustain ServeOhio's campaigns for days of service.
- Utilize above strategies to increase general awareness of ServeOhio and AmeriCorps.

Section 2: How Ohioans Serve Ohio.

Ohio is defined by a culture of neighbors helping neighbors. “The benefits of volunteering are to impact my family, friends, associates, church, community and profession,” one suburban Ohioan reported. “Volunteering allows me to connect with my community to make this world a better place to live-- and improve people’s quality-of-life and care.” Volunteerism is not just something Ohioans *do*; it is who we *are*. The survey findings guide the strategic goals to channel citizens’ desire to do more.

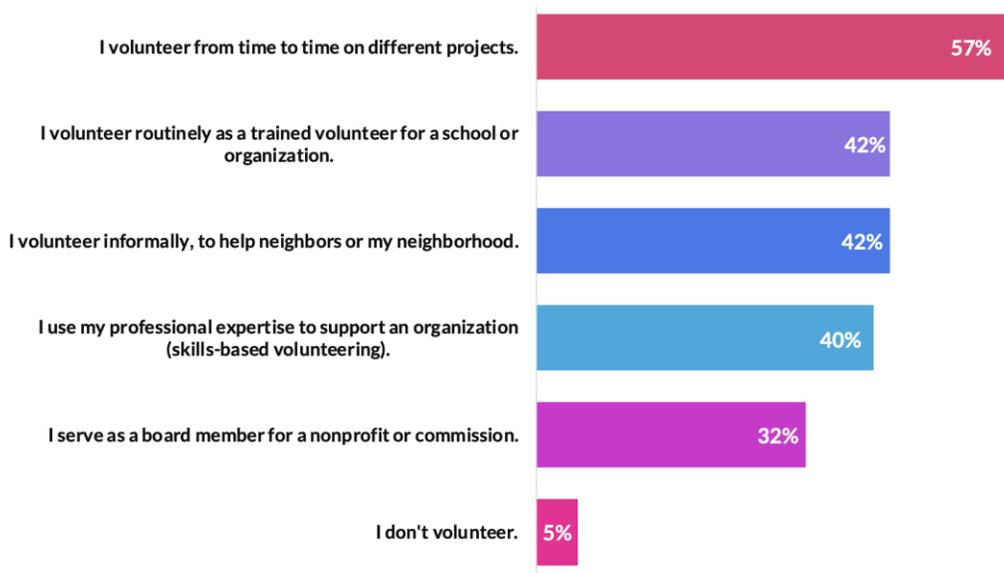
Ohioans Volunteer at high rates.

National research does not capture all of the ways Ohioans serve. When asked, “What do you do to make a difference, volunteer, serve others or contribute to your community”, **72%** of respondents offered detailed examples. In fact, only *five percent* of Ohioans checked the option, “I don’t volunteer.”

Ohioans volunteer in many settings.

There are many ways to volunteer, from a day of service to a weekly (even daily) engagement. A majority of Ohioans participate in project-based, episodic volunteering, followed by the traditional, formal volunteering on a regular basis for an organization. This survey found that while 42% of Ohioans volunteer through organizations, the same number (252 of 599 respondents) report that they volunteer *informally*.

A similar number (40%) participate in skills-based volunteering, which is an emerging strategy of ServeOhio. Skills-based volunteering leverages the specialized skills and talents of professionals to strengthen the infrastructure of nonprofits, helping them build and sustain their capacity to successfully achieve their missions.



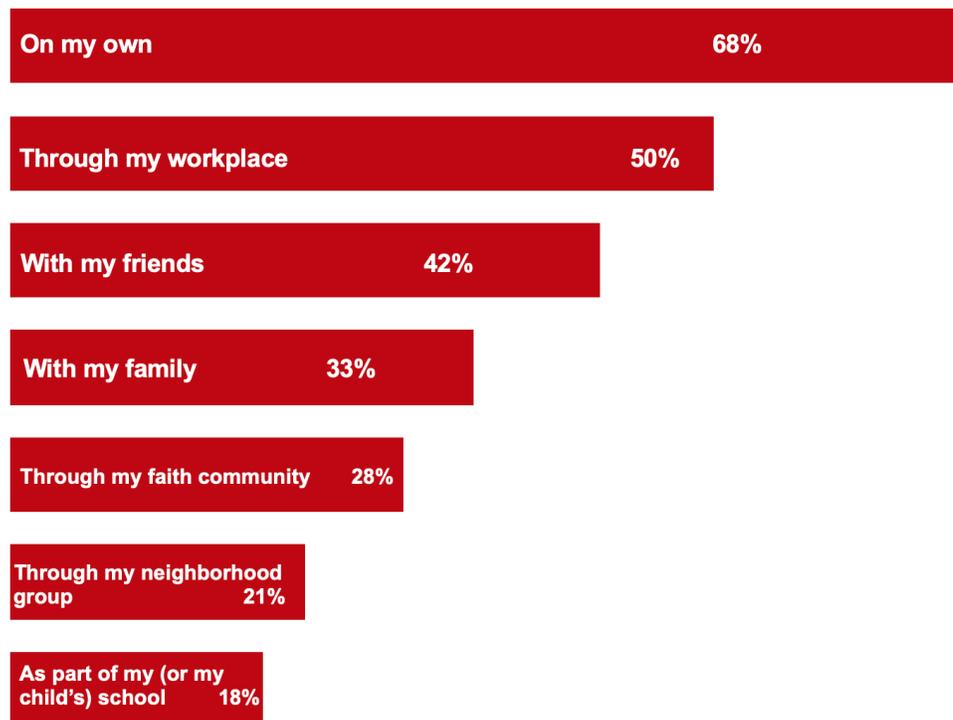
Ohioans volunteer in many ways. One person reports, “I volunteer with the local library to read with school-aged kids to practice their reading skills. I also volunteer in my church to bring communion to homebound church members and to co-lead our high school youth Sunday school class. I also volunteer several times a year to help with events at my workplace.”

Ohioans volunteer for many reasons.

Ninety-five percent of surveyed Ohioans responded that they volunteer in some way. The 580 respondents to this question listed an average of 2.4 preferences for their volunteer work. On average, Ohio's volunteers have not one, but **more than two** ways they choose to make a difference.

Volunteer service is a highly personal choice, and most people participate in their volunteer experiences "on their own" as a reflection of their values put into action. There is also a significant role that being part of group plays in volunteering. Ohio has a strong culture of workplace volunteering, with half of respondents reporting work as a venue for their volunteer work. Friends, family and faith make up a strong proportion of Ohioans' motives for volunteering. These findings are consistent, no matter what community size or region of the state Ohioans reside.

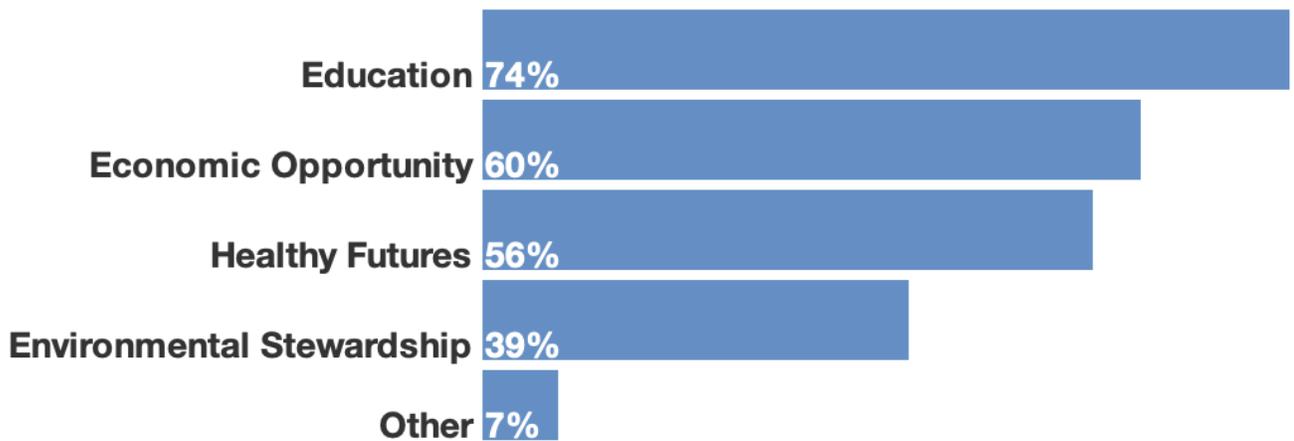
How (and with whom) do you volunteer?



Section 3: What Matters to Ohioans.

Ohioans understand that they have a voice in solving problems and they are the ones driving the change. People aren't waiting for organizations to tell them what they need. "We need more organizations to work together for people to know the best way to help the community," one reports.

Statewide, the priorities Ohioans report are in line with ServeOhio's portfolio of funded AmeriCorps programs. Here are the responses to the question, "Of ServeOhio's focus areas, which are most important to you? (Choose up to three.)"



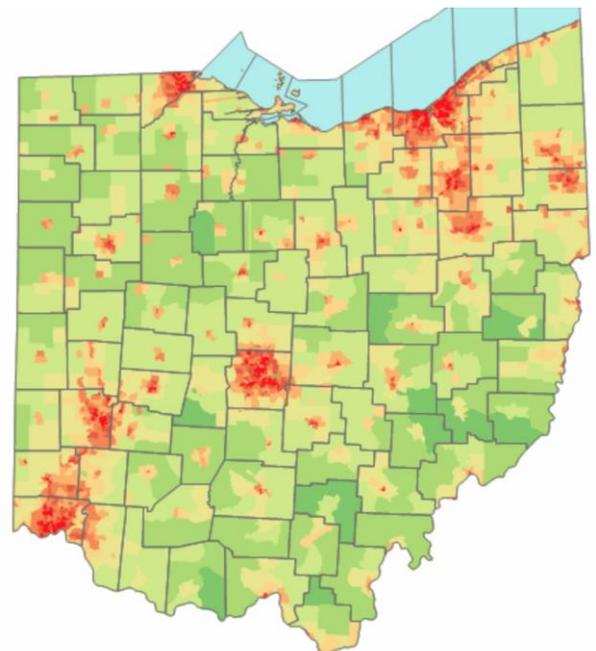
ServeOhio designed the survey to provide details about volunteer habits and priorities across a number of categories. Ohioans identify as being a Buckeye, but also as a member of a local community. Further, Ohioans care deeply about the kind of community they live in. Respondents were offered four choices to describe where they live:

Urban Ohio	31% of respondents (n=181)
Suburban Ohio	31% of respondents (n=183)
Small-town Ohio	21% of respondents (n=119)
Rural Ohio	18% of respondents (n=106)

These choices of community type reflect the population density of the State. While the *rates* of volunteering are consistent across the state, volunteer *engagement* varies depending on the size and location of your community.

Highlights:

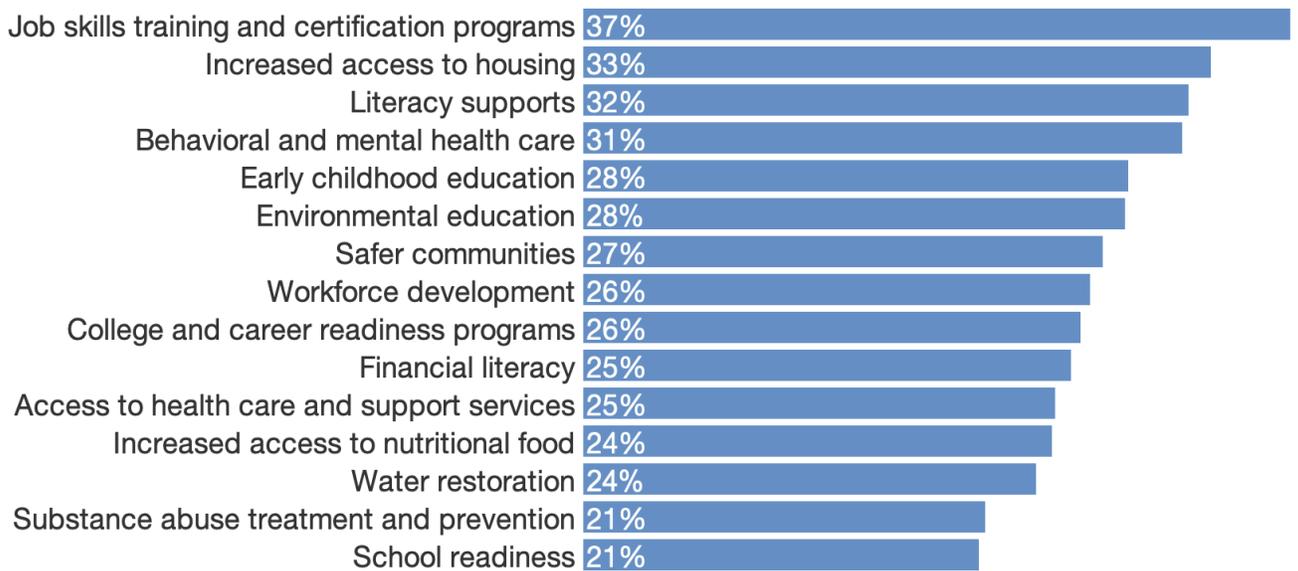
- Data and comments reflect that rural Ohioans are more concerned about drug abuse and food insecurity than elsewhere.



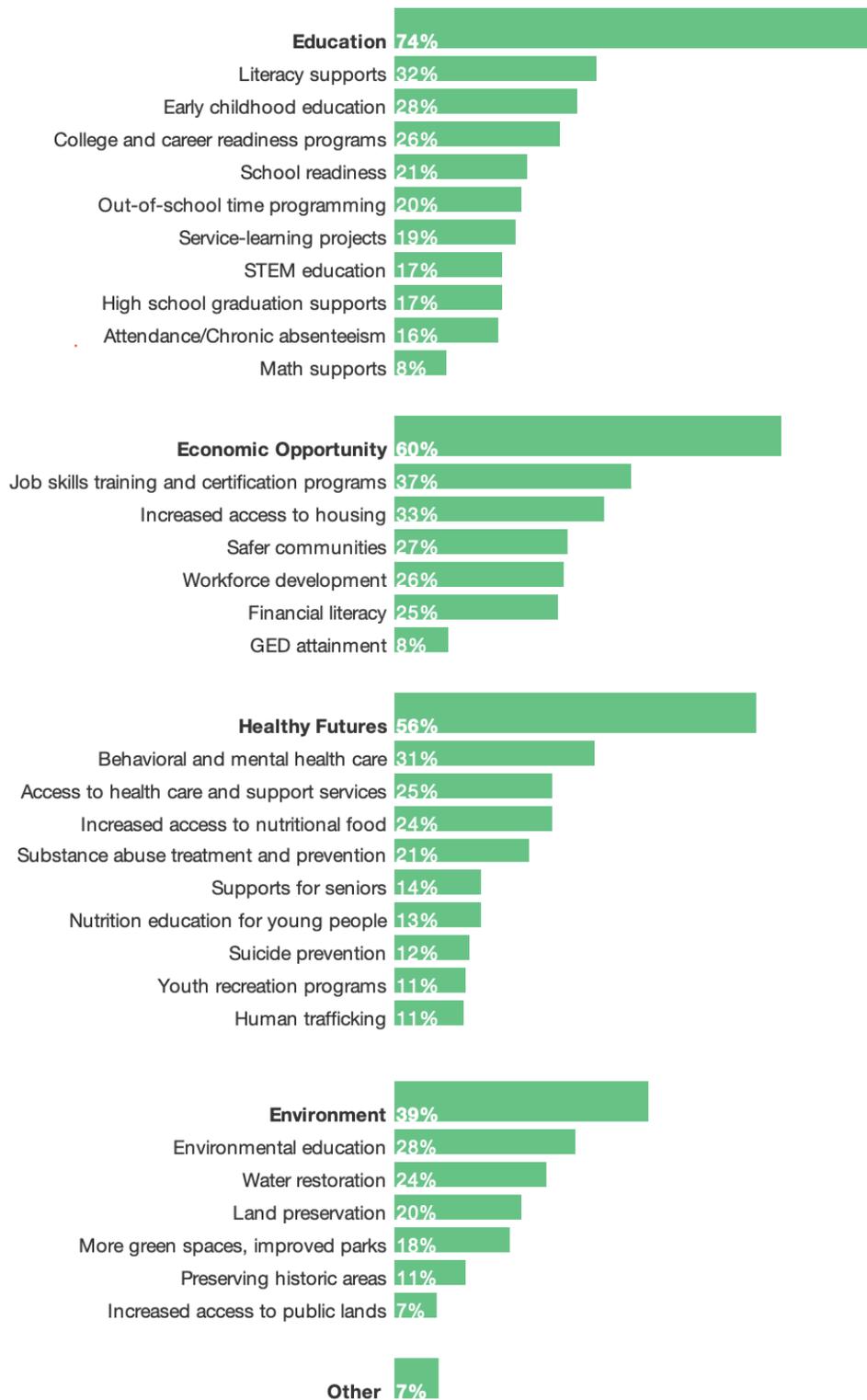
- Ohioans who live in small towns are 11 points more concerned about environmental stewardship than other population areas.
- Suburban Ohioans are significantly more interested in job skills training and financial literacy.
- Ohioans who live in urban areas are more concerned about education and economic opportunity than their counterparts in the rest of the state.
- Across types of communities, Ohioans see that their volunteer efforts should and can be devoted to addressing a sense of disconnection by forging new links. “I volunteer to connect those who have time and resources with the people and causes who need them.”

The survey provided 29 issue-area choices for greater specificity. Respondents provided, on average, 2.3 issue area priorities each.

Survey data show that Governor DeWine’s priorities mirror those of Ohio’s volunteers:



Ohioans' top three concerns (grouped by focus area)



Appendix: Survey Methodology

The State Service Plan was built upon feedback from Ohioans from all parts of the state and all types of communities. ServeOhio and the McMahon Consulting Group (MCG) worked together to create two pathways to receive as much citizen input as possible. During the Ohio Conference on Service and Volunteerism, held on October 23, 2019, ServeOhio and MCG conducted three focus groups with participants. People who work with volunteers and AmeriCorps members shared their feedback, insights and goals for the future.

To reach a broader audience of citizens, MCG worked with ServeOhio to develop a survey to track two types of questions:

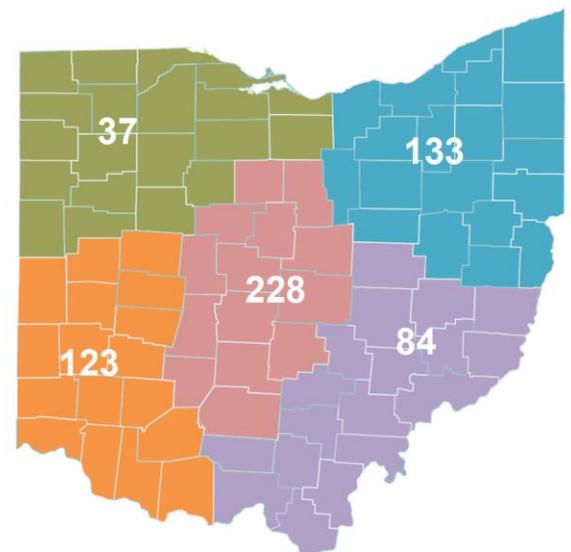
Level one: These questions refer to the respondent’s personal volunteer habits, experiences and preferences.

Level two: These questions refer to the respondent’s community needs and priorities.

MCG utilized Zoho Survey, a licensed web-based survey tool. ServeOhio used its email distribution lists and social media feeds to distribute and promote the survey opportunity across the state. The survey was live for six weeks in October and November, 2019. Using a “snowball” approach, ServeOhio stakeholders and survey respondents were invited to pass the survey link throughout their networks, to create a broad representation of responses and a virtuous cycle of participation.

Completing a 24-question survey about volunteering may require an interest in volunteering, and the investigators do not present the survey pool as a random sample of citizens. Nevertheless, the survey found a broad audience. To our knowledge, this matches the highest level of response for any state survey on volunteer habits and priorities.

1,505 people viewed the survey, and 605 completed it. Five were disqualified as non-Ohio residents. Specific attention was paid to generating a cross section of responses from each of the five regions of the state. The map shows the number of responses in each of the regions. Participation was statistically significant in all areas.



ServeOhio designed the survey to ask specific, in-depth questions about volunteer habits and preferences. In this way, investigators were able to track volunteer habits and priorities across regions and community size. Participants also responded to open-ended questions. For instance, 434 respondents gave specific examples to this question. “What do you do to make a difference, volunteer, serve others or contribute to your community?”

Survey participants shared their priorities for the strategic deployment of volunteer resources. Each participant was asked to choose up to three of ServeOhio's focus areas as a primary concern, and to select up to three issues in each area.

Investigators asked three levels of questions:

- If you could solve one problem in your community, what would it be? *481 responses*
- Of ServeOhio's focus areas, which are most important to you? *555 responses*
- Choose up to three issues (under the focus areas). *1,275 responses*

Complete analysis of state survey results, including citizen responses and cross tabulations by region, can be found at www.serveohio.org.

Contact

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