



Agency Information Collection Activities; Comment Request; Application Package for Current Population Survey Civic Engagement and Volunteering Supplement

July 13, 2026

Dear Office of Research and Evaluation Team,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the Civic Engagement and Volunteering Supplement Survey. This comment is provided by Volunteer Iowa, Iowa's state service commission. Volunteer Iowa and its partner agencies work with organizations and individuals to help agencies develop quality programs that use service and volunteerism as a strategy to fulfill their missions and address Iowa's greatest areas of need; engage Iowans in their communities by promoting service and expanding the volunteer base; and connect individuals with appropriate service opportunities by building the volunteer infrastructure.

Data collected in the Volunteering and Civic Engagement Supplement has tremendous practical utility and necessity for the performance of Volunteer Iowa and our partners, including but not limited to Volunteer Centers, local United Ways, state agencies, local governments, AmeriCorps programs, mentoring programs, and a variety of nonprofits. The proposed questions related to volunteer engagement, including questions about employer supported volunteering will provide data and insights that have and will be utilized to:

- Inform our volunteer engagement strategies, training, and resource allocation.
- Inform our state service plan, which is approved by Iowa's Governor Kim Reynolds, and serves as a blueprint for identifying state priorities, themes, and areas of emphasis among all the streams of service.
- Inform commission-led volunteer engagement strategies.
- Educate elected officials and stakeholders about the state's volunteer landscape.
- Identify trends and focus areas for training and facilitate cross-sector partnerships to further volunteer engagement initiatives and the work of Iowa's Day of Service and Volunteer Generation Fund grants.
- Provide positive marketing and communication data and talking points for Volunteer Iowa, AmeriCorps, and the broader volunteer engagement field about the importance of volunteering and how it intersects with American life.

Volunteer Iowa has submitted comments during the last public comment periods in 2017, 2020, and 2023 to recommend ways to enhance the quality and utility of the information collected when changes to the survey were proposed and implemented. We continue to have similar concerns, as the survey was altered to focus on civic engagement and reduce the questions associated with volunteering. The changes to the 2017 revised survey primarily reflected input from academics working in the space of civic engagement and did not provide adequate representation of practitioners working in the field of volunteering to develop a survey that reflects the data that is needed.

In 2020 we referenced a statement that still holds true today made regarding the survey by Dr. Robert Grimm, Director of the Do Good Institute at the University of Maryland School of Public Policy, in his testimony on Thursday, February 21, 2019 to the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service on as a panelist for the Universal Service Hearing: Inspiring Universal Service Across America:

“The Do Good Institute analyzes invaluable, gold-standard federal datasets on volunteering and civic behaviors that were collected annually from 2002 to 2015 by the Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics through Volunteer Supplements and Social Capital Supplements to the Current Population Survey (CPS) and through funding by CNCS. Unfortunately, CNCS decided to not fund a data collection in 2016 and then funded a data collection in 2017 with changes and issues that made it impossible to compare the data to fifteen years of prior data. I cannot overstate how important it is for CNCS to fix the 2019 supplement so future data is high quality and comparable to past federal data collections (2002 to 2015). I also urge the Commission to ensure that the federal government collects and reports annually on the trends in service and civic life. Otherwise, the government, states, cities, and leaders across the spectrum will never be able to benchmark and know if our efforts are changing civic life in America for the better.”

To remedy the challenges created by the 2017 survey changes, and to provide critical data needed to advance the volunteer engagement sector, Volunteer Iowa recommends reinstating or including the following questions:

1) Type of Activity -

- Coach, referee, supervise sports team
- Tutor or teach
- Mentor youth
- Be an usher, greeter, or minister
- Collect, prepare, distribute or serve food
- Collect, make, or distribute clothing
- Fundraise or sell items to raise money

- Provide counseling, medical care, other services
- Provide general office services
- Provide professional skills or management assistance
- Engage in music, performance, or other activities
- Engage in general labor or transportation
- Any other type of activity/specify

This question should be reinstated, as it provides valuable information regarding the type of service activities people are participating in such as mentoring, skill-based activities, or others. As an example, with a recent emphasis within the sector in the use of professional skills in volunteering, it would be helpful for practitioners to know if there is an increase in that type of volunteering over time.

2) Type of Organization - What type of organization is that?

- Religious organization
- Children's educational, sports, or recreational group
- Other educational group
- Social and community service group.
- Civic organization
- Cultural or arts organization
- Environmental or animal care organization
- Health research or health education organization
- Hospital, clinic, or healthcare organization
- Immigrant/refugee assistance
- International organization
- Labor union, business or professional organization
- Political party or advocacy group
- Public safety organization
- Sports or hobby group
- Youth services organization
- Some other type of organization

This question is important for the field to understand where people are volunteering.

3) How did (you/him/her) become connected as a volunteer for this organization?

How someone became involved/who asked them to become involved is a critical question for the field to understand where they need to focus more energy to engage people (i.e., employer, school, friend, family member, website, newspaper, place of worship, etc.).

4) Number of organizations: How many different organizations (have you/has he/has she) volunteered through or for in the last year, that is, since September 1, 202*?

This question provides insight into whether volunteers are more likely to be involved in multiple organizations or just one. This would assist organizations engaging volunteers in determining how partnerships relate to volunteer recruitment.

5) Add a question asking about whether volunteers donate financially to the organizations for which they volunteer.

This question will help inform the financial impact of volunteering and better capture the full contribution volunteers are making in the nonprofit sector.

6) Divide question SWP2 to ask about volunteering and pro bono services separate from donating to a charity to measure the rate of employer supported volunteering separate from financial donations.

By combining two different behaviors into one question, it will not be possible to tell the frequency of either. Dividing this question will allow both to be accurately be measured.

7) Add a follow up question, if no to volunteering. “What barriers prevent you from volunteering in your community?” And provide options such as “Time limitations, transportation, not interested, I don’t know how, financial limitations, etc.”

We also ask that AmeriCorps continue to invest meaningful time and energy into the analysis and reporting of the supplement data. Congress has provided AmeriCorps the direction and resources to conduct this survey, including “conducting related analyses, and reporting the data and analyses.” Recent efforts to make data accessible though the CEV Data Dashboard, as well as additional analysis such as the state level Markov Network Maps, have been exceedingly helpful for increasing access and usage. Volunteer Iowa and state partners have utilized these resources to inform our goal setting, strategy development, State Service Plan, and communications. This usage had not been possible in prior years, therefore it is critical AmeriCorps continue these efforts.

In closing, we encourage AmeriCorps to realize its full mission as intended by Congress – “to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering” – which includes a central focus on researching and promoting community volunteerism and volunteer engagement in America more broadly. We believe this can and must be done.

We urge AmeriCorps to meet its mission through:

- The reinstatement and inclusion of seven survey questions
 - Type of volunteer activity
 - Type of organization
 - Who asked them to become a volunteer or how they became connected



- Number of organizations: How many different organizations (have you/has he/has she) volunteered through or for in the last year, that is, since September 1, 202*?
- Whether volunteers donate financially to the organizations for which they volunteer
- Divide question WP2 to ask about volunteering and pro bono services separate from donating to a charity to measure the rate of employer supported volunteering separate from financial donations, and ask a follow-up question to learn if they participated after being encouraged.
- What barriers prevent you from volunteering in your community?
- The continuation of AmeriCorps' analysis and reporting on data from the survey

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment. Please do not hesitate to contact us with further questions.

Sincerely,

The Volunteer Iowa Team