
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

FROM A

STATEWIDE DIALOGUE

ON SERVICE AND VOLUNTEERISM

IN CALIFORNIA

*A Report from the Local Perspective
on
State Policy and Leadership
for
Advancing
Service and Volunteerism in California
in the
Twenty-First Century*

**THE JAMES IRVINE FOUNDATION
NOVEMBER 1999**

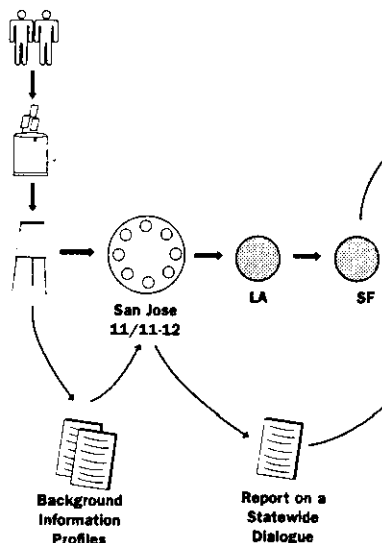
Dialogue Process Roadmap

Current State

"The conversation has stopped. How can we get it going again?"

- Differing definitions of "service" and "volunteerism" among people, programs and sectors
- Disconnects between state policy and local reality
- Great work being done by all, but barriers to visibility within the field itself, as well as to the general population

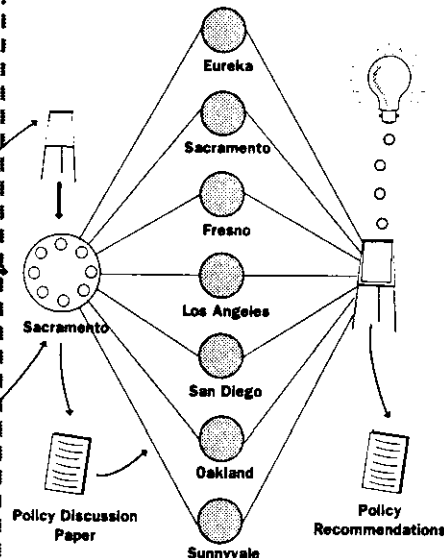
Vision Phase Fall 1997 - December 1998



Outcomes

- Core themes and ideas
- Policy as first focus - window of opportunity
- Better-connected field
- Next steps

State Policy & Leadership Phase January - October 1999



Desired Outcomes

- Broaden dialogue; broaden constituency
- Policy recommendations, informed by broad group.
- Dissemination of recommendations to programs and policy makers.
- Coalition for action

Desired Future State

- Well-connected, coherent field of service and volunteerism in California that thrives on grass-roots organizing, and is facilitated by sensible state policy.

KEY



Stakeholder Interviews



Data Gathering



Planning



Statewide Session



Regional Session



Document

Introduction: The Dialogue and This Report

During the past two years, as part of its focus on strengthening the nonprofit sector and encouraging civic engagement and responsibility, The James Irvine Foundation convened a statewide Dialogue to address this central question: *"How can we advance the ethic and practice of service and volunteerism to improve life in the state of California?"*

Key events in the Dialogue included:

- A two-day, statewide session held in November 1998 that brought together more than 60 service leaders from business, government, philanthropy, education, nonprofit organizations, civic groups, and religious institutions. They took the first steps toward formulating possible answers to the convening question by generating central themes and ideas for further exploration. The results of the meeting and early data collection are summarized in the *Report on a Statewide Dialogue on Service and Volunteerism in California*, issued in December 1998.
- A series of seven policy forums hosted by local organizations throughout the state in March and April 1999. These forums had three interrelated purposes: 1) to begin to help the field organize itself so that it has a stronger voice and, ultimately, an expanded and better-supported role in California's efforts to improve life for its residents; 2) to focus the Dialogue on the question of how state policy could advance the ethic and practice of service and volunteerism in California; and 3) to increase the depth and breadth of the Dialogue by ensuring that local perspectives played a key role in developing a framework for that state policy. In all, more than 400 people from a wide array of service and volunteer programs and activities participated in these seven, day-long meetings.

This report summarizes the key recommendations and principles—a suggested framework for state policy—that emerged during the local forums. That framework is still a work in progress. Thus, this report is intended to be a resource for local practitioners and advocates as they continue to work together and seek a stronger and more dynamic state role in service and volunteerism. And it is equally intended to be a resource for state leaders as they consider policies and other actions that will support and enhance the power of service and volunteerism in California.

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Service and Volunteerism in California: Current Sectors

Civic, Nonprofit, and Grassroots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonprofit organizations structured in different ways to deliver service through volunteerism: large national organizations; local or regional entities—some connected to, and others independent of, national nonprofits; and local grassroots organizations. • Local clearinghouses, referral organizations, and volunteer centers. • Wide variety of service clubs, and ethnic, civic, advocacy, and fraternal organizations. • Other grassroots initiatives and informal structures that vary—based on issue, locale, constituency, and other factors. • Statewide nonprofits such as Youth Service California and Volunteer Centers of California.
Faith-Based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual religious institutions or faith-based nonprofits organized to address the needs of their surrounding communities—sometimes in partnership with other nonprofits or government. • Collaborations of religious institutions within a community. • Regional initiatives, and state-level coordination and advocacy groups.
Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteerism as a component of community affairs, government relations, marketing, human resources, or public relations departments. • Structures and incentives for employee volunteering. • Corporate sponsorship of local service and volunteer activities.
Education	<p>K-12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • California Department of Education's CalServe initiative helps school districts achieve statewide service-learning goals and administers federal Learn and Serve America funds. • Local school district service-learning programs and/or requirements for community service. • Local school district linkages with adult service clubs, volunteer centers, community agencies, and high education and national service programs. <p>HIGHER EDUCATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campus-based community service and volunteer organizations and centers. • Linkages with "work study" and other incentives, such as America Reads. • Faculty symposia, K-12 teacher training, and curriculum development. • Institutional and systemwide support for service-learning. • Statewide linkage of campus programs by California Campus Compact.
Government	<p>LOCAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local coordination and funding for service and volunteer activities. • City and county volunteer offices and managers. • Participation in regional service efforts, such as Communities of Promise, that are committed to achieving America's Promise national goals. <p>STATE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • California Commission on Improving Life Through Service administers AmeriCorps funds, coordinates America's Promise activities, and works to weave "service as a strategy" into public initiatives. • California Conservation Corps operates a full-time youth development/environmental service program. • California Mentoring Initiative supports existing mentoring programs, works to start new ones, and forms regional and statewide coalitions. <p>FEDERAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporation for National Service (CNS) administers AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve America, National Senior Service Corps, and the National Civilian Community Corps. In California, the CNS State Office oversees VISTA and Senior Service Corps (RSVP, Foster Grandparents, and Senior Companion Program). • Points of Light Foundation—a federally supported nonprofit that encourages volunteerism and supports volunteer centers. • Volunteer coordinators and programs within federal agencies.
Philanthropy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private, community, and corporate foundations and donors. • Groups of foundations that have organized to advance service, such as the Grantmaker Forum on Community and National Service and the Northern California Grantmakers National Service Task Force.

California: A Legacy of Service and Volunteerism

In communities throughout the state, a rich array of service and volunteerism programs and initiatives engages thousands upon thousands of Californians. Students from elementary school through college learn as they carry out service projects; mentors support young people through one-to-one relationships; community-based organizations involve volunteers in delivering and expanding their services; religious institutions respond to the needs of their members and reach out to others; local and statewide conservation corpsmembers address social and environmental problems while they also develop themselves; AmeriCorps members dedicate one-to-two years to improving the community; Senior Corps members address the needs of children, youth, and the elderly; and corporations encourage their employees to volunteer. Those are just a few examples of activities that are taking place in every corner of the state.

Among the states, California has consistently been a national leader in service and volunteerism—through, for example, its support for youth service and conservation corps, service-learning goals and activities, and the statewide mentoring initiative. State trends in service are also being affected by actions at the national level—most significantly, federal 1990 and 1993 national and community service legislation, and activities following the April 1997 Presidents' Summit for America's Future. The federal legislation envisioned a new way of doing business—challenging states to organize themselves differently and programs to look at how they work with others—and California quickly became a leader in innovative implementation of AmeriCorps. The Presidents' Summit resulted in 19 California cities becoming *Communities of Promise* that are committed to meeting national goals for children and youth—not only by serving their needs through volunteer action but also by expanding opportunities for youth to serve others.

Clearly, the traditional notion of volunteerism as neighbors helping neighbors has been joined by a wide range of roles being carried out in every sector—civic, nonprofit, and grassroots; faith-based; business; education; government; and philanthropy.

The Dialogue's purpose was to convene a broad conversation that would encompass all of these sectors. But what do they have in common? Dialogue participants grappled with the need for shared definitions—both to use among themselves as they work to identify their common ground, and to broadcast externally as they work to engage more people and to secure broader support.

The challenge to clarifying definitions is that the wide-ranging approaches to service and volunteerism are grounded in different philosophical, cultural, and practical underpinnings: service as a fundamental part of citizenship, as a strategy to solve persistent social problems, as a component of learning, as a means to build community, as a way to connect people and to connect resources with needs. The approaches are embodied in different forms and practices: service-learning; paid or stipended community and national service; a spectrum of community, faith-based, business, and government-sponsored volunteer programs; mandated community service as an education requirement or alternative to sentencing; and the innumerable everyday acts of people helping one another.

Service and *volunteerism* are words that are flexible and inclusive. Thus, perhaps the best way to think about definitions was expressed by one local-forum participant when he suggested that the common denominator is "the ethic of service."

Envisioning the Future

Central Themes from the Dialogue

The first phase of the Dialogue included a two-day session that brought together more than 60 service leaders from across the state. They identified six key themes that should be the foundation for steps to strengthen policy and action for service and volunteerism. These themes include:

1. A Stronger Future for California

Service and volunteerism can and should be an integral part of a stronger, better California that works for all of its people.

2. A Unifying Force

Service and volunteerism must value and utilize the strengths of California's diverse communities and cultures. They can be a force that unites and engages all of the state's people in working towards a better future.

3. Leadership and Innovation from the Field

The field of service and volunteerism can take a leadership role in addressing the critical issues facing California.

4. A Dynamic State Role

Statewide leadership, infrastructure, and support are essential for complementing and enhancing local action and creativity in service and volunteerism.

5. Mutually Supportive Systems

Communities, the service and volunteerism field, private foundations, and all levels of government should work together to develop an infrastructure and build practices that will support and enhance the power of service.

6. Communication and Visibility

The field of service and volunteerism should develop strategies for communicating its stories and its value to a wide range of audiences.

The Dialogue: Envisioning the Future for Service and Volunteerism

This is a time of transition. Service and volunteerism in California are faced with both opportunities and challenges as a result of significant changes in infrastructure, visibility, and complexity during the past ten years. Examples of these changes include new collaborations at the local, regional, and statewide level; changing roles for faith-based initiatives; new volunteer strategies within business; statewide service-learning goals; national goals established by America's Promise; and the creation of federal and state entities to promote service and provide funding for locally-based service collaboratives.

Within the broad spectrum of service and volunteer programs, there is a strong perception of an increased demand on nonprofits, local governments, and churches to solve more—and more complex—problems in their communities. And as practitioners and policymakers look to the twenty-first century, there is also the question of how service and volunteerism can play a significant role in reinvigorating civic engagement in an era when more traditional forms of civic participation (such as voting and involvement in traditional civic associations) appear to be in decline.

There are new structures, new roles, increased expectations of what service and volunteerism should be accomplishing. At the same time, demographic, economic, and social changes have contributed to a shift in who is available to serve. While middle-aged women—once considered the backbone of service and volunteerism in their communities—are now faced with enormous demands on their time, other human resources may be increasing. Adults are retiring from work when they are younger and healthier, and a recent poll demonstrates that a vast majority of these “older” adults want to be engaged in community service after they retire.¹ Large numbers of students from grade school through graduate school are becoming involved in service through service-learning initiatives and related programs. And organizations and agencies are increasingly calling on communities in all their diversity to become involved in solving their own problems.

Against this complex yet promising backdrop, the first phase of the Dialogue focused on creating a broad vision for the future of service and volunteerism in California. This vision, developed by the more than 60 people who attended the Dialogue's statewide session in November 1998, was summarized in six central themes. (For the themes, see the box on the facing page.) While these themes articulated what service and volunteerism could potentially accomplish for the state and its residents, they also identified what would be required for that potential to be achieved: increased collaboration within, and leadership from, the service and volunteerism field; and state policy that supports, and works in concert with, the field as it moves forward.

¹“The New Face of Retirement: Older Americans, Civic Engagement, and the Longevity Revolution.” A Survey Conducted for Civic Ventures. September 1999. Peter D. Hart Research Associates.

Across the State: Regional Issues and Trends

During each local forum, participants took part in a "scan" of the issues and trends affecting service and volunteerism in their region. The following provides a sample of the responses and a picture of the environment in which service and volunteerism operate.

Eureka

- Growth in service-learning
- Increasing government sponsorship of volunteer programs
- Greater need for nonprofits and volunteerism to be "safety nets"
- Ongoing difficulties associated with sustaining quality programs
- Decline in local economy

Sacramento

- Greater demand for services at the same time there is less public funding
- Changing balance between government and non-government responsibility for social issues
- More barriers to effective volunteerism (e.g., turnover, fingerprinting, costs, time)
- Lack of public awareness of volunteer opportunities

Oakland

- Increasing disconnect—linguistically, culturally, economically—between servers and those who are served
- Need for more complex training for volunteers and better structure to manage volunteers, as volunteers are expected to fill more substantive roles
- Fewer people with time to engage in civic activity
- More emphasis on service in schools

Sunnyvale

- Growing interest in community service requirements from elementary school through college
- More emphasis on volunteers as a professional group
- Increasing interest in using service as a vehicle for developing marketable skills
- Emerging dialogue around how service can contribute to livable communities

Fresno

- Greater need for volunteers for schools, after-school activities, neighborhood partnerships, parent/family support, health, and mentoring
- Increased costs and complexities involved in using volunteers
- More collaboration among programs, but continuing issues of duplication and competition

Los Angeles

- Increasing diversity affects those who serve and those who need services
- LA's widespread scope—both geographic and demographic—creates problems with access and issues of community boundaries and fear
- Reductions in corporate volunteer involvement because of corporate downsizing, headquarters leaving LA, and less philanthropy from the growing number of small- and medium-sized businesses
- More young people volunteering as a result of more school-based service-learning and community service programs

San Diego

- Increasing sense of self-interest, resulting in less motivation to volunteer
- Communities seem more isolated—because of geography, different ethnicity, and languages
- Growing population diversity

Enriching the Dialogue: The Local Perspective

The purpose of the local forums was to both focus and expand the Dialogue—to begin to construct a framework for state policy that would strengthen service and volunteerism, and to help the field begin to develop a stronger voice and, ultimately, an expanded and better-supported role in California's efforts to improve life for its residents.

The forums were held in seven regions across the state (see the box on the facing page), and they were attended by representatives from a broad range of agencies, organizations, and other groups. They included:

America Reads programs	Corporations
American Red Cross	County Offices of Education
AmeriCorps programs	Faith-based organizations
Area Agencies on Aging	Family and health clinics
Big Brothers/Big Sisters	Foster Grandparent Programs
Boys and Girls Clubs	Girl Scouts
California Association of Non-Profits	Learn and Serve America Higher Education programs
California Campus Compact	Learn and Serve K-12 programs
California Commission on Improving Life Through Service	Local conservation corps
California Conservation Corps	Mentoring programs
California Department of Education	Municipal volunteer programs
California Service Community Initiative sites	Museums
California State Senator and Assemblymember offices	Public elementary, middle, and high schools
California State University campuses	Public libraries
Campfire Boys and Girls	Private foundations
Catholic Big Brothers	Private high schools
Catholic Charities	Regional networks
Childcare centers	Regional Service-Learning Leads
City and county governments	Resource and referral centers
Colleges and universities	Retired and Senior Volunteer Programs
Community Action Agencies	School Districts
Community-based organizations	Senior centers
Community centers	United Way
Community Colleges	Vietnam Veterans of America
Community foundations	Volunteer Centers
Corporate foundations	YMCA
	YWCA
	Youth Service California

Despite the differences in philosophies, missions, and goals among this diverse group of participants, and despite the unique economic, social, and cultural situations of each region, there was much agreement about the ways that service and volunteerism could be supported through sensible state policy. The following pages outline the principles and recommendations that emerged from the forums.

Examples of Current State-Level Involvement in Service and Volunteerism

Corps Programs

- **California Conservation Corps** (established in 1976): state agency operates a full-time youth development, environmental, and human service program through 17 service districts statewide.
- **California Department of Aging**: provides matching support for the federal Foster Grandparents Program and Senior Companion Program.
- **California Association of Local Conservation Corps** (established in 1989): network of 10 independent, nonprofit service corps that receive part of their funding from two state agencies—the California Department of Conservation and the California Conservation Corps.
- **California Commission on Improving Life Through Service** (established by Executive Order in 1994 as mandated by the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993): the lead agency for administering federal AmeriCorps funds in California, it supports over 60 programs enrolling more than 8,000 AmeriCorps members.

K-12 Service Learning

- **California Department of Education CalServe Office** (established in 1991): promotes service-learning curriculum and administers federal Learn and Serve funding for local school districts.
- **California Service-Learning Goals** (established in 1996): developed by a task force appointed by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, two key goals are – 1) by 2000, 25% of all school districts in California will offer service-learning or community opportunities to each grade span (K-5, 6-8, 9-12); and 2) by 2004, 50% of all districts will include at least one service-learning experience for each grade span.

Higher Education

- **California's Human Corps Legislation** (signed in 1987): recommends, but does not mandate, that state college and university students complete 30 hours of service prior to graduation.
- **California Campus Compact** (established in 1988): the association of college and university chancellors and presidents committed to expanding student involvement in service as part of higher education.
- **California State University Strategic Plan for Community Service-Learning** (adopted in 1997): establishes two key objectives for CSU's 23 campuses – 1) engage students in at least one community service-learning experience prior to graduation; and 2) offer a continuum of community service opportunities.
- **California Community College CalWorks AmeriCorps Program** (founded in 1997): engages welfare recipients in early childhood education and service on 23 campuses.
- **Student Academic Partnerships Program** (signed into law in 1998): enables school districts to work with college students to provide tutoring assistance for K-6 students and gain pre-service training as prospective teachers.

Other State Programs that Support Service and Volunteerism

- **California Mentoring Initiative** (established in 1996): based in the California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs, this initiative works with regional mentoring coalitions and over 140 local organizations to promote mentoring for youth.
- **California's Communities of Promise** (established in 1997): a network of 19 California communities that are working to address youth needs through volunteer action and to expand opportunities for youth to serve others. The Commission on Improving Life Through Service provides support for these efforts.
- **California Service Communities Initiative** (established in 1998): Administered by the Commission on Improving Life Through Service in conjunction with other statewide nonprofit and public agencies, provides support to local and regional collaborations of service and volunteer programs.

A Framework for Future State Policy and Leadership

Throughout the seven policy forums, participants emphasized that the primary focus of service and volunteerism is local, and grappled with how best to support it through government policy. As a result, they viewed “policy” in the broadest sense—the roles, regulations, and resources that might be provided at the state level to help advance service and volunteerism in every California community.

Although the forums were not designed around a “consensus building” process, there was tremendous similarity in the issues and ideas that were raised. While it is difficult to summarize the thinking of over 400 people, there were six distinct areas of recommendation that emerged as a framework for future state policy and leadership. These areas include:

1. **Service as a Strategy**
Advance service as one strategy for addressing critical issues in communities throughout the state.
2. **Resources for Program Quality**
Provide financial and other resources to enhance the capacity of local service and volunteer programs.
3. **Incentives to Serve**
Use incentives and other types of support to encourage more Californians, from young children to senior citizens, to get and stay involved.
4. **Regulatory Barriers**
Ease barriers to recruiting and deploying volunteers and other community service participants.
5. **Infrastructure**
Support and strengthen the infrastructure for service and volunteerism within the State of California.
6. **Communications and Visibility**
Increase public awareness, involvement and support for service and volunteerism.

Each of these recommendation areas is outlined on the following pages. Because forum participants explored a wide range of ideas, principles, and specific examples, the following discussion includes a brief introduction to the context for each recommendation, guiding principles for state policy, and some specific ideas for moving forward. These ideas include examples from the field of what is already happening and of what might happen given a more dynamic state role.

1. Service as a Strategy – Advance service and volunteerism as one strategy for addressing critical issues in communities throughout the state.

Dialogue participants discussed the importance of “service as a strategy” from two different perspectives:

- 1) *Service and volunteerism as a concrete strategy for tackling social, environmental, and economic problems.* They believe that volunteers and community service workers can add significant value to the work of paid professionals in the governmental and nonprofit sectors.
- 2) *Service and volunteerism as a vehicle for enhancing civic engagement, citizenship, and community building.* They believe that volunteers and community service workers can derive tangible benefits for themselves and their communities by getting involved.

However, participants also stressed the importance of not “over promising” what service and volunteerism can accomplish or of viewing volunteerism as a replacement for broader state policies that address critical community problems.

Guiding Principles for State Policy

To advance service as a strategy, the state should:

- ✓ Make service and volunteerism a priority in state policy, and encourage each state department to weave service into policies and programs.
- ✓ Allow for local planning and development based on valid needs assessments.
- ✓ Encourage a wide spectrum of service and volunteerism (from unpaid volunteerism to stipended community service work) for all ages and all communities.
- ✓ View service as a means to enhance, but not replace, public sector involvement in meeting community needs.

Ideas for Moving Forward

Target state initiatives where service and volunteerism have high potential to make a significant difference. Look at existing programs and projects to identify promising approaches. Examples include:

- Education – tutoring, mentoring, adopt-a-school, parent involvement, school volunteers, service-learning, AmeriCorps, America Reads.
- Children, youth, and family issues – child abuse prevention, after-school programs, health initiatives, Healthy Start.
- Other youth development issues – juvenile crime, substance abuse, teen pregnancy.
- Senior issues – Retired Senior Volunteer Program, Senior Corps
- Welfare reform – California Community College CalWorks AmeriCorps project.
- Community development – low income housing, public space improvements, neighborhood enhancements, YouthBuild.
- Environment – California Conservation Corps, local conservation corps.

Promote service-learning as an effective way to combine service with learning for all California public school students—from kindergarten through higher education.

- K-12 – Advance the California Department of Education’s CalServe Initiative and its goal that at least 50% of California schools include service-learning. Recent national research (by Brandeis University) and a study of California schools and communities (by RPP International) confirmed that service-learning is an effective strategy for K-12 teaching and learning, and produces measurable positive impacts in young people, schools, and communities.
- Higher education – Build on existing efforts (e.g., the California State University and California Community College programs) to integrate service-learning into the state’s institutions of higher education.

2. Resources for Program Quality – Provide financial and other resources to enhance the capacity of local service and volunteer programs.

Throughout the policy forums, local practitioners, and policymakers talked about the challenges to developing and sustaining high-quality service and volunteer programs. Some key challenges include:

- 1) Adequate and long-term funding.
- 2) Program design and implementation, particularly given the current emphasis on collaboration.
- 3) Volunteer management—the skills and expertise needed by both volunteers and professional staff.

However, many also expressed enthusiasm about the progress and promise of their local initiatives. They talked about a stronger state role that enhances, but does not replace, the good local work.

Ideas for Moving Forward

Look for creative ways to provide state funding to leverage local resources.

- Work with local communities to assess gaps in existing systems and programs in order to determine the highest priorities for funding.
- Provide support to local and regional collaborations, volunteer centers, nonprofits, cities, counties, educational institutions, and other entities that already design and implement service and volunteer programs.
- Develop ways to ensure that Californians who volunteer receive the assistance they need to make a difference—including training, supervision, and transportation.

Recognize and advance “best practices” in community service and volunteerism.

- Work closely with practitioners and other experts to identify and disseminate information on high-quality program practices.
- Facilitate information sharing across the state.

Facilitate access to technical assistance and training. Although technical assistance and training needs vary tremendously from community to community, there are a number of key areas that could be supported by the state:

- Volunteer management training
 - Service-learning curriculum development and teacher training
 - Service-specific training needs (e.g., tutoring, elder care, etc.)
- Such assistance could be delivered through local organizations, depending upon needs and available resources.

Guiding Principles for State Policy

To further quality program development, the state should:

- ✓ Invest in local programs and structures as a means to create a statewide system. Emphasize long-term support to contribute to sustainability.
- ✓ Build on assets that communities have to solve their own problems.
- ✓ Carefully assess the financial and human resource needs associated with new state initiatives and mandates.
- ✓ Ensure that all state initiatives are based on “best practices.”
- ✓ Support research and evaluation on a wide variety of program models.

3. Incentives to Serve – Use incentives and other types of support to encourage more Californians, from young children to senior citizens, to get and stay involved.

While hesitant to play the numbers game, local forum participants expressed strong interest in expanding the number and diversity of people and organizations involved in service and volunteerism. Many voiced concerns that there has been an increase in the demand for volunteers, particularly volunteers who can make long-term commitments, at the same time that there has been a decrease in the number of people who volunteer and the amount of time they commit. As a result, there was near consensus on seeing state leadership and policy play a role in developing incentives to motivate people to participate in community service and volunteer opportunities.

However, there were very strong and divergent opinions on using community service requirements as one such mechanism for increasing participation. Mandated community service is an idea that has been used within the criminal justice, education, and welfare reform systems. Examples of specific practices include graduation requirements in K-12 and higher education, and using community service as an alternative to sentencing. Local forum participants wanted to see the effectiveness of such existing community service mandates assessed before considering the implementation of new mandates.

Guiding Principles for State Policy

To increase service and volunteerism, the state should:

- ✓ Take leadership within state departments to encourage state employees to volunteer.
- ✓ Look for opportunities to create and publicize incentives for individuals and organizations.
- ✓ Provide support for stipends and other expenses in order to allow people to commit themselves to long-term, intensive service.
- ✓ Make sure that state-mandated community service is supported through adequate resources—in the institutions that administer such mandates and at the community level where the delivery system must be in place.

Ideas for Moving Forward

Create incentives and recognition for individuals and organizations (nonprofits, schools, businesses, and government agencies) to incorporate service into their plans and programs.

Specific suggestions include:

- Tax incentives for individuals who volunteer.
- Tax incentives for businesses that give employees release time or offer flexible schedules to encourage volunteering.
- State agency policies to encourage state employees to volunteer.
- Academic credit, career try-out, clear connections to learning, and other benefits for students.
- Recognition of volunteer work performed by welfare recipients.

Explore more ways to provide stipends or financial supports to encourage service and volunteerism. Ideas include:

- Stipends for community service workers, such as AmeriCorps members, conservation corpsmembers, Foster Grandparents, etc.
- Education credits, vouchers, or other incentives
- Scholarships
- Free or subsidized bus passes or other transportation support.
- Other expense reimbursement (e.g., childcare).

4. Regulatory Barriers – Ease barriers to recruiting and deploying volunteers and other community service participants.

While local forum participants were consistent in their support for careful screening and deployment of volunteers and community service workers, they cited a number of key state requirements that serve as significant barriers to recruitment and retention:

- 1) Fingerprint checks, that are part of a broad system of security checks to protect children and adults in care settings, have created several issues – costs of fingerprinting, lengthy processing time, lack of a uniform local system for taking fingerprints, and loss of prospective volunteers because of long waits and privacy concerns.
- 2) Difficulty and costs associated with obtaining liability insurance necessary for “risk management” issues involved with engaging volunteers.
- 3) Labor laws that affect the ability of AmeriCorps and some other community service programs to offer stipends instead of traditional wages.

Dialogue participants felt that a proactive state role on these issues could significantly enhance their programs at a local level.

Ideas for Moving Forward

Streamline and reduce costs associated with fingerprinting requirements and systems.

- Work with the State Department of Justice to streamline systems and to develop more consistent local access statewide to easy and free or low cost fingerprinting (particularly through technologies such as “live scan”). Possible mechanisms for access include local law enforcement or Department of Motor Vehicle offices.
- Work with programs to identify strategies (administrative, legislative, etc.) to alleviate issues associated with fingerprinting and other screening requirements (such as TB testing).

Explore potential state roles to address “risk management” issues.
Specific suggestions include:

- Low-cost liability insurance for nonprofits and schools.
- A state insurance fund for organizations that engage volunteers.

Create a state labor law exemption for stipended programs such as AmeriCorps. This would allow programs to provide living allowances in a manner consistent with the intent of federal legislation that participants not displace workers and not be considered as employees of the programs through which they serve.

Guiding Principles for State Policy

To address regulatory issues, the state should:

- ✓ Take leadership to simplify background checks and “risk management” barriers to service.
- ✓ Explore options for state sponsorship of liability insurance and other measures that would significantly benefit local programs.
- ✓ Assess labor issues to identify administrative changes that would increase service and volunteerism.
- ✓ Streamline state reporting requirements, wherever possible.

5. Infrastructure – Support and strengthen the infrastructure for service and volunteerism within the State of California.

During the local policy forums, there was near consensus on two potentially disparate points:

- 1) State-level entities can play a significant role in advancing the ethic and practice of service and volunteerism in California, and
- 2) Local and regional organizations and networks are the front-line for program design and delivery.

Participants discussed various ways to achieve what they viewed as a complementary system of state, regional, and local efforts. However, the message was clear—the field wants a state-level organization that resists bureaucracy, plays a leadership role among policymakers, and actively represents California's diverse regional needs and range of service efforts.

Guiding Principles for State Policy

State infrastructure should:

- ✓ Be a catalyst and mechanism for the vision and message of service.
- ✓ Include local and regional representation.
- ✓ Expand the capacity of local collaborations through funding, information dissemination, and assistance.
- ✓ Emphasize innovation and flexibility to support the range of existing activities in California's diverse communities.
- ✓ Build on what is in place in different institutions and at different levels in the state and its regions, counties, cities, communities, and neighborhoods.
- ✓ Be an advocate and vehicle for federal support.

Ideas for Moving Forward

Create a broader and stronger state commission on service. Expand the mission of the California Commission on Improving Life Through Service, and strengthen its role as the facilitator for service at the state level by: 1) empowering it to link together the governor, the legislature, and state agencies around issues involving service and volunteerism; and 2) broadening representation of diverse groups such as municipal programs, volunteer centers, senior volunteers, youth, education, service corps, faith-based institutions, businesses, community organizations, and philanthropy.

Strengthen local and regional programs and networks. Develop mechanisms to ensure that local perspectives are integrated into planning and functioning of state activities. Assess and build on the existing regional collaborations, such as the CalServe Regional Service-Learning Leads, Communities of Promise, the California Service Communities Initiatives, Mentoring Coalitions, and other statewide, regional, and local collaboratives.

Improve coordination among statewide efforts. This includes governmental and non-governmental entities such as:

- State agencies – the State Commission, California Department of Education CalServe Office, California Mentoring Initiative, California Conservation Corps, and other state efforts that might link to service (America Reads, CalWorks, welfare reform, education, crime prevention, youth issues, etc.)
- California's public higher education institutions – Chancellor's Office of the California Community Colleges, California State University Community Service Learning programs, and the University of California system.
- Statewide organizations – Volunteer Centers of California, Youth Service California, California Campus Compact, Service Learning 2000 Center at Stanford University, California Association of Non-Profits, California Association of Local Conservation Corps, and others.
- Federal statewide programs – California Office of the Corporation for National Service that administers VISTA and National Senior Service Corps programs in California.

6. Communications and Visibility – Increase public awareness, involvement and support for service and volunteerism.

Throughout the local forums, participants stressed the need to increase visibility for service and volunteerism in California. They believe this is critical for several reasons:

- 1) To encourage more people to get involved,
- 2) To enhance program sustainability by broadening and solidifying its constituency, and
- 3) To build support for service-friendly policies and resources at the local, state and national levels.

Although it was more difficult to determine how best how state policy could support a comprehensive communications strategy, there were many ideas for state leadership and how a state role might complement local and non-governmental roles.

Ideas for Moving Forward

Provide high profile state leadership for service and volunteerism.

Some specific ideas include having elected officials participate in service on a regular basis, developing policies for state employees to take time off to volunteer (similar to policies in some businesses), recognizing outstanding individuals and “best practices,” and establishing a state tax check-off to support service and volunteerism activities.

Develop a plan to improve access to public information about service and volunteerism opportunities. Gather information on service and volunteer programs, their areas of focus and current communication approaches. Assess gaps in existing information systems. Support research to better understand who serves, who doesn’t and why. Determine how best to develop statewide information functions that complement local ones—in order to promote a wide diversity of opportunities to serve throughout the state. Look to technology to enhance ease of access and links to local systems. Make sure this capacity is in place prior to launching any major communications campaign.

Launch a statewide communications campaign to promote service and volunteerism. Forge partnerships within and outside of government and at the statewide and local levels to develop and get out a unified message on service and volunteerism. Determine the most effective way to connect a statewide message with local needs and opportunities.

Develop a message that reflects the value of service and volunteerism in all of its diverse forms in California. Engage marketing experts to develop such a unified message. Some initial ideas generated by Dialogue participants include: a service version of the “California – It’s the Cheese” campaign, “Hands on California,” “California Cares,” “Got Time?” and tapping into the idea of “what it means to be a Californian.”

Guiding Principles for State Policy

To further public awareness and support, state policy should:

- ✓ Support a marketing campaign about the importance of service to life in California.
- ✓ Look for opportunities to integrate service and volunteerism in visible places within state leadership and agencies.
- ✓ Help develop and disseminate better information through existing infrastructures at all levels—statewide, regionally, and locally.
- ✓ Forge partnerships with local agencies and non-governmental sectors to promote service and volunteerism.
- ✓ Provide support to local efforts to build communications capacity.

Conclusion: Taking Action for the Twenty-First Century

As California enters the new millennium, the time seems especially auspicious for the state to again step forward and lead the nation in advancing the ethic and practice of service and volunteerism. Statewide leadership, infrastructure, and support are essential for complementing and enhancing local action and creativity.

And the stage is being set for such action to occur. During 1999, there has been a great deal of activity on state policy that will have an impact on the future of service and volunteerism. Governor Davis issued a new call to service when he proposed making community service a graduation requirement for all California public college and university students. The state legislature advanced a bill to codify and plan for a "retooled" State Commission on Community Service; although this bill was not signed by the Governor, it has initiated an important discussion about the future role of the Commission on Improving Life Through Service. Additionally, the legislature passed and the Governor signed several bills, including ones that address some key fingerprinting issues for volunteers and another that provides support for YouthBuild programs. The California State Senate and Assembly also considered legislation to develop a service-learning master plan for higher education; link school scholarships to service; and support youth-to-youth peer programs, school volunteers, and mentoring. Many of these ideas will continue to be explored in the year 2000.

The field is very encouraged by the growing interest, but also deeply aware of what it takes at the local level to plan and deliver the high-quality service and volunteer opportunities that could emerge from such state-level initiatives. Local forum participants spoke passionately about the need for coordinated, not fragmented, state policy and about the importance of their ongoing involvement in the development of such ideas and initiatives.

To help serve as a vehicle for ensuring that there will be such an ongoing field voice, three statewide organizations—California Campus Compact, the Volunteer Centers of California, and Youth Service California—are collaborating to provide leadership for keeping the field informed and organizing for policy action.

At one Dialogue meeting, a participant posed the challenge: "We have a moment in time. We want to come up with something that is clear and understandable and truly represents the diversity of the field." Today, the field is ready to move forward and to work with the state in new ways—to achieve a broad set of goals that will, in fact, advance the ethic and practice of service and volunteerism to improve life in California in the twenty-first century.

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Sorbus domestica

The service tree, or Sorbus domestica, grows in Europe and Africa.

It is a tree of many uses. The ancient Celts made cider from the fruit of the tree;

Italians in the middle ages carved statues of saints from its wood.

There are many variations of the service tree, but they all grow slowly and root deeply into the soil.

A single tree may become as tall as 65 feet and live for more than 500 years.