



May 2026 Commission Meeting

Wednesday, May 20th, 2026
3:30pm-5:00pm

Locations

Virtual Meeting via Webex:

<https://illinois.webex.com/illinois/j.php?MTID=m1ed9534b1edbb6629d52e5064093872a>

In-Person Meeting at:

Chicago: 401 South Clinton Street Chicago, IL 60607 -- 7th floor executive conference room

Chicago: Burley Elementary School 1630 W. Barry Avenue, Chicago, IL 60640

Springfield: 823 E Monroe Springfield, IL 62701 – 1st floor executive conference room

Elmhurst: Elmhurst Public Library – 125 South Prospect Ave, 2nd Floor, Elmhurst, IL 60126

Agenda

1. Call to Order – Amy Rueff, Serve IL Chair and Andres J. Fernandez, Serve IL Executive Director
2. Roll Call – Rachael Tuxhorn, Serve IL Administrative Assistant
 - a. **Commissioners Present Virtually:** Cathy Leonis, Gwyndolyn Moss, Laura Stukel, William Wetzel
 - b. **Commissioners Present In-Person:** Lee Badesch, Rosie Drumgoole, Marshall Goldsmith, Samantha Ellison, Natalie Furlett, Benjamin Kagan, Carolyn Roberts, Amy Rueff
 - c. **IDHS Staff Present:** Raja Banerjee, Cory Blissett, Andres J. Fernandez, Barbara Hobrock, Karrie Rueter, Rachael Tuxhorn
 - d. **Guests Present:** N/A
3. Approval of the Minutes
 - a. Did not meet quorum and will approve minutes at the next meeting.
4. Serve Illinois Board Chair Update – Amy Rueff
 - a. Subcommittee Reports - Executive, Relational, Programmatic, Operational:
 - i. **Executive**
 1. Nothing to report currently.
 - ii. **Relational**
 1. They have not met but are working on next meeting date.
 - iii. **Programmatic**
 1. They have not met but are working on next meeting date.
 - iv. **Operational**
 1. Carolyn Roberts and Laura Stukel provided an update in that the Operational Committee met with IDHS Serve IL staff to discuss potential metrics to report on in each board meeting. A follow-up



meeting was scheduled with Serve IL staff to finalize metrics from the strategic plan.

- b. Strategic Plan Discussion
 - i. Will continue to monitor the strategic plan with commissioners and staff.
 - 5. Serve Illinois Executive Director Update - Andres J. Fernandez
 - a. Portfolio Updates
 - i. AmeriCorps
 - 1. We are currently in PY2025 which runs 9/1/2025 - 8/31/2026. Here is a data snapshot:
 - a. 433 members enrolled and earning an award.
 - b. 16 members have already completed their service term and earned an award.
 - c. 20 members pending enrollment for the summer term.
 - d. 58 members are serving their 3rd term with Serve Illinois.
 - 2. PY2026 will run 9/1/2026 - 8/31/2027. Formula Fixed and Formula Traditional NOFOs are live. Applications are due for both on June 12th.
 - 3. Still waiting on results for AmeriCorps Competitive Traditional.
 - 4. We have asked for programs to hold August 5th for a PY26 Program Orientation to take place in Chicago and are working on the details.
 - 5. The Program Officers have been traveling to sites to do on-site monitoring visits to their programs and then performing the desk audits piece following their visit.
 - 6. Serve IL staff developed both an on-site interview tool and a desk audit tool for programming and financial management.
 - ii. National Service Program
 - 1. Serve Illinois has been operating our first-ever Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) program for over a year with great success! This program focuses on expanding Teaching Civics for Justice Illinois.
 - 2. We have applied to add an additional partnering site to our VISTA program. The proposed additional site is River Bend Food Bank and will help build capacity and reduce food insecurity in 18 counties in Illinois.
 - 3. University of Illinois is inviting community-based organizations and any service-learning organizations to participate in the Teaching Civics curriculum. The first 100 participants to complete the course will receive acknowledgement from U of I and will be able to use the curriculum to teach youth in summer programs throughout the state. Serve Illinois is currently helping market this through social media and listserv.
 - iii. Volunteer Program
 - 1. Added two new Serve Illinois team members: Rita Rodriguez – Certified Bilingual (Upstate Volunteer Services Coordinator) and
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Rachel Flores (Downstate Volunteer Services Coordinator). Rita started with us on April 15th, and Rachel started with us on April 1st.

2. Governor's Volunteer Service Awards (GVSA) was held in Springfield on April 30th. Governor Pritzker provided a recorded video for the 2026 winners.
 3. Illinois Conference on Volunteerism and Administration (ICOVA) is tentatively scheduled for October 9th, in Chicago. More details to come soon.
 4. Governor's Hometown Awards (GHATA) set for August 19th, in Springfield at the IL State Fairgrounds.
 5. Volunteer Expansion initiative tied to SNAP
 - a. As of today, there are 1,630 registered individual users in Galaxy Digital. That is a 39% increase since December 2025.
 - b. As of today, there are 233 organizations registered in Galaxy Digital. That is a 35% increase since December 2025.
 - c. As of today, 108 individuals have received training on Galaxy Digital through our lunch-n-learn sessions.
 6. Volunteer Program continues to support IEMA with disaster training. Serve Illinois staff are certified in muck-n-gut training and travels across the state to train people and communities.
- b. Senior Portfolio Manager Updates – Caitlin Bierman, AmeriCorps Midwest Senior Portfolio Manager
- i. Formula
 1. We were able to make formula awards by April 1st!
 2. We expect to provide Commission staff with more information on next steps soon.
 - ii. Data and Survey Requests
 1. You may have been contacted by the Office of Accounting and Financial Management Services (AFMS) to invite your organization to participate in a cash position survey the week of May 11, 2026. Although participation is voluntary, your timely response supports future grantmaking activities by providing information that is essential to enhancing our accountability and effectiveness in serving you and fulfilling our responsibilities to Congress and taxpayers. Responses will not be used for grant oversight or monitoring. All data will be kept confidential and internal to the agency.
 - a. The email will come from grantsaccounting@americorps.gov with the subject line “AmeriCorps Grant Accrual Survey”. You may follow up with questions to that inbox.
 2. You may be contacted by the National Service Trust and Office of Risk and Monitoring with a request for data as part of a process for validating the eligibility of a sample of education award recipients. An email was sent to all AmeriCorps State and National partners with more information on April 22.
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- a. If you are contacted, please respond in a timely manner. You may send questions to TrustHelpDesk@americorps.gov.
 - iii. Education Award Changes
 1. Education Award changes (e.g. adding an education award) are not always reflected on the grantee side of eGrants after the Trust makes the update. The alum should see those changes reflected in their account. For future issues, we recommend having the partner check back with the alum to make sure those changes are reflected.
 - iv. Evidence Exchange
 1. The Grantee Evidence Exchange is now back to being operational (though there are still more features coming)! Access it through AmeriCorps' data page.
 - v. Volunteer Enrollment Period Changes
 1. These changes will be delayed until FY 2027 so they can be included in the NOFO.
 2. FY 2026 Terms and Conditions will be updated to reflect the change back for this year.
 3. ASN will reach out for additional dialog about these changes and their potential impacts.
 - vi. Office of Regional Operations Travel
 1. ORO is beginning to travel again! It will look different than before, but please let us know of events in your state that might benefit from agency presence.
 - vii. NCCC Volunteer and Team Lead Applications
 1. AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) is currently accepting applications for NCCC Team Leader and NCCC Volunteer positions for the Fall 2026 Traditional NCCC Class. Applicants selected to serve as NCCC Team Leaders and NCCC Volunteers will deploy across the country to serve communities on projects related to natural & other disasters, infrastructure improvement, environmental stewardship and conservation, energy conservation, and urban & rural development.
 - a. We ask state commissions to help amplify these service opportunities by sharing with community stakeholders in your networks, on your social media channels, in newsletters, etc. Information for the NCCC Team Leader and NCCC Volunteer opportunities and links to the applications are below.
 - b. Please feel free to contact Ken Goodson (kgoodson@americorps.gov) with any questions you have. Thank you for your continued support and partnership with AmeriCorps NCCC.
 - i. Traditional NCCC Team Leader (ages 18+, no upper age limit) Apply by May 31. Serve: August 2026 – July 2027 NCCC Team Leader Application
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- ii. Traditional NCCC Volunteer (ages 18–24) Apply by June 30. Serve: August 2026 – July 2027 NCCC Volunteer Application
- viii. CNCS Grant Opportunities
 - 1. ASN Native Nations Operational and Planning Grants – due May 20th
 - a. For Native Nation Operational Grants updates for FY 2026:
 - i. Streamlined available slot types from seven to five, removing Reduced Half Time and Abbreviated Time for new and recompute applicants.
 - ii. Applicants are approved for pre-award costs for one month prior to the start of their program.
 - iii. Changes to Selection Criteria point values for Community and Logic Model, Notice Priority, Organizational Background and Staffing and Member Supervision.
 - c. Mandatory Trainings
 - i. Currently at 19% completion.
 - d. Special Announcement
 - i. Andres' last day with Serve IL is Friday, May 29th, 2026. He would like to thank the commissioners and staff for their collaboration and dedication over the last several years.
 - e. Proposed Goals and Objectives
 - i. Identify a goal that all 3 committees-programmatic, relational, and operational-can focus on that compliments each individual committee's objectives.
 - ii. Serve Illinois Commission staff can provide support to each committee to reach outcomes.
 - iii. Report progress on objectives quarterly with the 4th quarterly meeting designated to highlight successes by each committee.
 - iv. Serve Illinois is a key player in addressing critical needs that impact the physical, social, and/or economic well-being of communities throughout the state, by providing supports to increase access to resources and reduce disparities within communities that need it most.
 - 1. Programmatic Committee Objectives
 - a. Objective 1: Serve Illinois becomes "known" as an organization that prioritizes, understands, and is committed to demonstrable impact within a specific issue area and/or geographic area
 - b. Objective 2: Serve Illinois Commissioners are engaged and activated to utilize their expertise, relationships, and resources to advance the mission of the organization.
 - 2. Relational Committee Objective
 - a. Objective 1: Serve Illinois is viewed as a valuable and trusted partner to state agencies and local organizations that utilize service and volunteerism as a key strategy to improve outcomes and increase impact



3. Operational Committee Objective
 - a. Objective 1: Partner organizations report improvements in key indicators that reflect positive outcomes in specific issue area and/or geographic area.
 - b. Objective 2: Serve Illinois plays a leadership role in developing and managing initiatives that align to key government priorities in order to increase their scope and impact in targeted sectors and areas throughout the state.
 4. Strategies to Consider Within Committees
 - a. Target volunteerism and service efforts to focus on a high-need, high impact topic and/or geographic area.
 - b. Allocate a significant portion of grantmaking and volunteerism efforts to an area or sector that is particularly relevant to the communities that SI serves (e.g., food insecurity, housing, etc.)
 - c. Engage in regular touchpoints with Governor's office to identify strategic opportunities to align service efforts with key social sector priorities.
 - d. Deepen IDHS' understanding of Serve Illinois; AmeriCorps' requirements, culture, and norms; and the pivotal role that service and volunteerism can play in advancing the Governor's vision.
 - e. Pilot a project (within IDHS or another agency) to demonstrate Serve Illinois' impact and deepen the organization's understanding of how to partner with state agencies and teams.
 - f. Deepen Commissioners' understanding of Serve Illinois' mission, purpose, and key activities so they can better serve as engaged and effective ambassadors for the organization.
 - g. Engage Commissioners to leverage their resources/relationships to advance Serve Illinois' strategic agenda across public and nonprofit partners and agencies.
 - h. Expand communications and outreach to highlight grant opportunities, activities, and successes.
 5. Metrics to Consider for Committees
 - a. # of grantees / programs engaged
 - b. # and/or % of key stakeholders that associate Serve Illinois with work in specific communities and/or issue areas
 - c. Stakeholder map and engagement goals (e.g. engaging with a designated number of IDHS/state government staff per quarter); and impact of those engagements.
 - d. # and/or % of IDHS (or other agency staff) who proactively engage Serve Illinois in projects
 - e. # of inter-agency projects that Serve Illinois is engaged in and performance measures that demonstrate the impact of those projects
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f. # and/or % of commissioners who act on behalf of Serve Illinois

6. Public Comment

a. None currently.

7. 2026 Meeting Dates

a. August 26, 2026

b. November 4, 2026

8. Adjourn

Amy Rueff adjourned the meeting