

Governor's Advisory Board on Services and Volunteerism

September 26, 2019; 10:30 AM – 3:30 PM

Ashland Branch Library

201 S. Railroad Ave., Ashland, VA 23005

Board Members Present: Lily Beres, Jessica Bowser, Vanessa Diamond, Mark Fero, Ashley Hall, Zachary Leonsis, Tyee Davenport Mallory, Seema Sethi, Julie Strandlie, James Underwood, Steven Valdez, Leah Dozier Walker, and Sheila Williamson-Branch

Board Members Absent: Elizabeth Childress Burneson, John Chapman, Omari Faulkner, Terry Frye, Gina Lewis, and Leslie Van Horn

CNCS Representatives: Tynetta Darden and Kellie Mattingly

VDSS Staff Present: Gail Harris, Roxanne Saunders, Kimberly Brown, Gail Doyle, Shannon Girouard, Samantha Lukasiewicz, Christina Dumas, Vickie Johnson-Scott, and Jae-Young Choe

The Board Meeting was called to order at 10:40 AM by Board Chair Julie Strandlie, who greeted the Board members and Commission staff and expressed excitement to begin serving the Board as Chair.

Adoption of Agenda and Minutes

The floor was opened for the adoption of minutes from the last board meeting on April 9, 2019. The motion to adopt the minutes was made by James Underwood, Lily seconded, and all approved. The floor was then opened for approval of the agenda. The motion to adopt the agenda was made, seconded, and approved.

Introduction

As the new Board Chair, Julie Strandlie, introduced herself and then prompted the rest of the board attendees to introduce themselves, including the new Vice Chair Steven Valdez. OVCS Director Gail Harris then led the group in an ice breaker activity among Board members and State Commission staff.

Catch Up Since the April Meeting

Since the Board had not met for more than four months, Gail provided updates on the many activities and events that had taken place since the April 2019 Board meeting.

Gail reported on the Reconciliation of the 2019/20 portfolio, highlighting certain 2019/20 sub-grantees. Among them funding for Beans & Rice decreased and other programs were able to accept additional funding. Staff issued a short-turnaround RFA focused on the opioid issue for the remaining formula funds. Hampton Roads Community Action Program (HRCAP) was the only applicant and was selected for a small 19/20 grant. Board member Steven Valdez inquired about the process to determine HRCAP as award recipient over another programs and AmeriCorps Program Manager Roxanne Saunders explained that HRCAP was the program that appropriately responded to the RFA (Request for Application) in the Hampton Roads/Tidewater area.

Roxanne Saunders provided a bit of background on HRCAP. This organization focuses on training and prevention activities related to substance use with young children and high schoolers. Their program

will begin their AmeriCorps program year on September 1, 2019, ending on August 31, 2020, after which they would have to reapply for another program year. Other updates included:

- As AmeriCorps programs in the state of Virginia launch into a new program year, Gail Doyle presented the Board a map, displaying the AmeriCorps scope of service in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- Gail Harris thanked the Virginia Service Foundation for their support of the Volunteerism Conference in this past month of May. The Conference agenda included the National Service Awards ceremony and thirty workshops. There are now more applicants for workshop presenters than the number of workshops.
- Just the following month in June many AmeriCorps Program Directors and State Service Commission staff attend the ASC Conference in June to gain a deeper understanding of and proficiency with AmeriCorps programming.
- Gail reported that anonymous surveys were completed by AmeriCorps members regarding their experiences during the service year. Some key take-aways from the surveys were highlighted.
- Finally, in July the 2019-2020 Program Director Training event took place over a couple days (July 16 and 17), hosted by and the State Commission Staff and attended by AmeriCorps program directors.

AmeriCorps Program Presentation

Samantha Lukasiewicz introduced program director Shanna Boutchyard of Rappahannock Goodwill Industries: Goodskills Literacy Corps, an AmeriCorps program since 2011. Shanna provided some background information including the organization's beginnings with VISTA. Rappahannock Goodwill serves the surrounding area with job training, an adult literacy program, job coaching, and job help centers. They employ individuals with disabilities through their AmeriCorps program, helping them overcome barriers to employment. Prior to adding the AmeriCorps program, the organization didn't have a formal way to serve those with severe disadvantages such as being an English language learner, low literacy skills, or lack of experience with resume building. Rappahannock Goodwill organizes community service projects such the AARP food drive, Spa Day at Brisben Center, and a homeless shelter on MLK Service Day.

The primary purpose of the program is to offer one-on-one and small group tutoring, implement outreach to recruit program participants and volunteers, and to offer professional development to the community. It aims to have participants gain skills needed for jobs, become more self-sufficient, and to be able to better support their families. In addition to serving as the main adult literacy tutoring program in the area, they also offer training for participants to strengthen their financial literacy skills especially for the economically disadvantaged, to accelerate digital skills, and/or to pursue a digital career. Onboarding classes for workplace literacy are also offered. Training involving the acquisition or improvement of tutoring skills is provided to AmeriCorps members. With the assistance of their various partners, Rappahannock Goodwill strives toward a target of serving 1,000 participants each year. For the current program year of 2019-20, they begin the year with 696 volunteers.

Shanna introduced Alumni AmeriCorps member and current Assistant Program Director of Rappahannock Goodwill, Dominique Thomas, who provided some personal background on how she started with the program. Dominique highlighted her most valuable lessons and takeaways as a former AmeriCorps member, including developing skills in team building, public service, and relations with challenging teammates or coworkers.

Highlights of the Year Ahead

- Gail Harris reported on the CNCS transformation and updates. It was noted that a single portfolio manager will oversee AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and VISTA.
- She and the AmeriCorps Program Officers further prepared for the new program year through their attendance at the 2019 AmeriCorps State & National Symposium earlier in September.
- The new program year for AmeriCorps members will be launched with the AmeriCorps Opening Day and Training on September 27, 2019.
- The 2020-21 funding application processes will be open to both new and returning applicants to be reviewed and judged on a level playing field. Outreach is also underway to attract new applicants. A change in the process is that Competitive and Formula funding applications are now separate—there is no more “guaranteed” formula funding for Competitive funding applicants if they don’t get selected by CNCS for Competitive Funds.
- Gail concluded with upcoming board meeting dates and other important dates.

Committee Meetings

At 1:17 p.m. the board meeting broke out into three sub committees: the Program Committee, Communications and Special Events Committee, and the Advocacy and Public Policy Committee.

The board meeting reconvened at 2:33pm, and the Chairs of each committee offered a report.

Advocacy and Public Policy Committee

Jessica Bowser, new Chair of the Advocacy and Public Policy Committee, reported that the group discussed what should be the priorities and goals for the newly formed subcommittee. A point of focus during the discussion was clarification on the restrictions on. Another focus will be sending of thank you letters to elected officials of varying levels, focusing on the local level first before contacting those of the state and federal levels. These letters may include an invitation to visit AmeriCorps program sites within their districts.

Program Committee

Program Committee Chair Ashely Hall reported that programs are working to fill their remaining positions for the 2019/20 AmeriCorps program year; the Virginia College Advisory Corps of UVA has already reached 100% recruitment. Ashley also reported some challenges to recruitment and retention among other programs.

Compliance and Monitoring have found some issues regarding criminal background checks and are in the process of correcting that. Currently five programs are scheduled for monitoring.

The Competitive Application Process for the RFA will be released in early October. Three programs with Competitive funding will need to reapply along with new applicants. The Formula Application process will release in November with a due date of January 10.

Special Events and Communications Committee

Leah Walker, new Chair of the Special Events and Communications Committee provided a recap of 9/11 Day. Gail Doyle passed around to Board members new marketing materials with a brief description of AmeriCorps programs, intended to target AmeriCorps members and potential AmeriCorps programs. Gail Doyle will follow up with an email sending some digital tools and PDF files that can be used to promote AmeriCorps and its programs. Leah asked the Board to think of their networks and to be an ambassador of the programs. Tomorrow, September 27, 2019, will mark the 25th Anniversary of AmeriCorps. Leah encouraged Board members to attend and to wear the red 25th Anniversary T-shirt at the AmeriCorps Opening Day Launch Ceremony.

The Committee discussed how to improve the nomination process of the Governor's Service and Volunteerism Awards. There was a decline in nominations for youth and small business categories. Leah gave an overview on the nominations outcomes and popular categories, including a surprisingly low number in the faith-based category. The Board was asked to utilize their networks and help promote nominations such as with outreach to schools, parks and recs, etc. Suggestions from the Board were encouraged. The Committee discussed ways to increase nominations from other parts of the state such as Southside Virginia, as well as possibly revising the nomination application by making some sections not mandatory. Leah proposed to the Board that a young adult category (18-25 years of age) be added.

The next Volunteerism Conference will take place at the Hilton in the Short Pump area of Richmond. Recommendations for possible speakers, sponsors, and exhibitors are encouraged and can be sent to Gail Doyle. The Commission Staff is thinking of changing the format to have Day 1 of the Conference with a "lunch on your own." Leah concluded the Committee report with a presentation of the 25th AmeriCorps Anniversary video.

Public Comment

Co-Chair Steven Valdez reported on the Virginia Service Foundation (VSF) and reported on improving the budget with updates forthcoming. Donations to VSF can be made on their website: www.virginiasservicefoundation.org.

CNCS State Office Director Report

Tynetta Darden reported that the regional CNCS office is no longer in a physical space and that the best way to contact is via email or phone (DC phone number) at the moment. VISTA is continuing with four deadlines for organizations to apply for VISTA resources. Please direct inquires via the website. October 1 is the next deadline for VISTA concept papers, followed by deadlines in January, April, and July. Please check dates to apply by specific deadlines in order to be considered for VISTA resources. Although it can be difficult to have one-member VISTA organizations, a single VISTA member can now be indicated in the application.

A big competition running from October 1 through Thanksgiving is coming up for Seniors aged 55 and up, and October 26 is Drug Take Back Day. Stayed tuned for more information on the CNCS transformation plan by checking the website: www.nationalservice.gov.

Final Remarks and Reminders

Julie Strandlie opened the floor for any questions or remarks, and began concluding the Board meeting by expressing her excitement for the coming year and the energy of the Board. She thanked everyone for attending and reminded that the next Board meeting takes place on November 14, 2019.

Closing and Adjournment

Julie asked for a motion to adjourn at 3:19 p.m., Ashley Hall responded, and Tye Davenport Mallory seconded the motion.

Prepared by Jae-Young Choe

Submitted by Gail Harris