



## **Governor's Advisory Board on Service and Volunteerism**

November 19, 2020; 10:00 AM to 3:30 PM

### MEETING MINUTES

Board Members Present: Lily Beres, Jessica Bowser, Elizabeth Childress Burneson, Vanessa Diamond, Mark Fero, Ashley Hall, Zachary Leonsis, Tyee Davenport Mallory, Priscilla Martinez, Jenne Nurse, Seema Sethi, Julie Strandlie, James Underwood, Leslie Van Horn, Sheila Williamson-Branch, and Clifford Yee.

Board Members Absent: Lisette Carbajal, Omari Faulkner, and Gina Lewis.

VDSS Staff Present: Kathy Spangler, Roxanne Saunders, Kimberly Brown, Gail Doyle, Leanne Constantinidis, Christina Dumas, Analise Adams, Shannon Girouard, and Jae-Young Choe

CNCS Representatives Present: Lora Grady and Adrienne Melendez

### **Welcome and Call to Order**

The Board Meeting was called to order at 10:07 a.m. by Board Chair, Julie Strandlie. The floor was opened for the adoption of the minutes from February 27, 2020. The motion to approve and adopt the minutes was made by Tyee Davenport Mallory, Mark Fero seconded, and all were in favor. The floor was opened for approval of the agenda. The motion to adopt the agenda was made by Leslie Van Horn, James Underwood seconded, and all were in favor.

Julie Strandlie welcomed the Board and introduced the new director of the Virginia Office on Volunteerism and Community Service (OVCS), Kathy Spangler. Kathy is joining just after serving a five-year term as Executive Director of the Commonwealth of Virginia's 2019 Commemoration of the 400th year anniversary. She is a nationally recognized leader with more than 40 years of experience in public and nonprofit management. Kathy expressed excitement to be working with the Virginia Service Commission team and the Advisory board to enhance and improve national service and volunteerism throughout the Commonwealth.

Julie began introductions starting with herself and then on to three new board members: Cliff Yee, Executive Vice President Chief Financial Officer of Northern Virginia Family Service; Brian Pearce-Gonzalez, Professor of Hispanic Studies at Shenandoah University; and Priscilla Martinez, Special Projects Director of the Loudoun Literacy Council. Self-introductions continued with the remaining board members as well as the Virginia Service Commission staff.

Julie Strandlie briefly updated the Board on some occurrences since February 2020, including the cancellation of both the 2020 Volunteerism Conference and the 2020 Governor's Volunteerism Awards Ceremony. Since these cancellations, Julie and the Virginia Service Commission (VSC) staff have been working on the press release for November 2, 2020. There have also been social media posts on Facebook and Twitter of the full press release and individual posts on the Volunteerism award recipients.

## **America's Service Commissions (ASC)**

Julie Strandlie introduced Emily Steinberg and Tom Branen of the America's Service Commission (ASC). Emily Steinberg, Director of External Affairs for ASC, informed the Board on ASC's mission to lead and elevate the state network as a nonpartisan nonprofit association representing and promoting 52 service commissions across the U.S. and their programs, administering nearly 80% of AmeriCorps State/National funds which support more than 40,000 AmeriCorps members. Further, ASC administers the States for Service (S4S) Coalition, a privately funded advocacy arm to protect and expand national service as well as the state service commissions. Commissions are strongly encouraged to join the coalition, focusing on service at the state and local level.

Emily emphasized that public policy matters are also part of the board's responsibility by educating elected officials as stewards of federal funds and tax payer dollars. It is always allowable to educate elected officials on factual information such as numbers, facts, and figures. Emily concluded by notifying the Board of a public policy advocacy campaign currently underway as an end-of-year thank you campaign to Congress. She requested that more Virginians thank those in the Senate and House who supported the CORPS Act in 2020 and increased funding and flexibility for national service in the House stimulus bill.

Tom Branen of ASC provided some updates to FY2021 Appropriations. The Senate Appropriations Committee releases its drafts of all 12 annual spending bills for 2021 totaling \$1.4 trillion, setting up negotiations for a deal ahead of the Dec. 11 deadline to keep the government running. The Senate package includes a \$50 million increase for the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), including a \$32 million increase for AmeriCorps State and National grants, an \$8 million increase for SeniorCorps programs, and a \$1 million increase for State Commission Grants.

As the Covid-19 pandemic continues past another presidential election, a new stimulus battle is primed to begin now that the Senate and House are back in session. Tom highlighted the crucial role that Congressman Bobby Scott, Chair of the Education and Labor Committee, played in championing the inclusion of national service in the stimulus bill, which proposes \$350 million in supplemental funds for the CNCS/the AmeriCorps Agency.

During the presidential transition, ASC is working to engage the agency review teams once they are formally assigned to CNCS. Of the post-election takeaways for National Service, some positives include opportunities for no more elimination recommendations, a potential for a future Reauthorization bill to allow more sweeping changes to national service benefits, and a potential for additional COVID Stimulus. Some challenges include heightened divisions and partisanship and a need to reintroduce the CORPS Act. Tom outlined how the CORPS Act would expand national service in combating food insecurity, fight learning loss in schools, and support public health needs. ASC is working to include in the CORPS Act support for 600,000 AmeriCorps members over the next 3 years, an increase in the education award, and other initiatives to expand and strengthen AmeriCorps programs.

## **Catch Up Since the February 2020 Board Meeting**

Roxanne Saunders introduced the Virginia Service Commission (VSC) staff roles to the Board. She then reported on some changes, including the shift to work remotely since mid-March for the VSC staff due to Covid-19 and the retirement of former OVCS Director, Gail Harris at the end of May. The VSC has been assisting AmeriCorps programs navigate and operate through the pandemic with guidance from the Corporation of National and Community Service (CNCS) and ASC. The Program Directors' training conference in July was virtual.

Shannon Girouard presented the 2019-2020 end-of-year fiscal report beginning with an overview of the AmeriCorps state competitive programs. 81% of the funds awarded by CNCS were expended by the end of the program year, which was in August 2020. The match budgeted was \$535,298.00 and the match contributed was \$366,072.20. The match rate realized at the end of the program year was 42.8%, which was in compliance.

There were ten AmeriCorps programs in the state formula portfolio. Despite concerns stemmed from Covid-19, the programs successfully performed and provided matching funds. 80.4% of the funds awarded by CNCS were expended by the end of the program year. The match budgeted was \$3,559,774.00 and the match contributed was \$2,793,641.77. The match rate realized was 52%, well exceeding the minimum requirement of 39%.

Shannon then gave an overview of programs funded in the portfolio for 2020-2021. Overall there is one program in the competitive portfolio and 13 in the formula portfolio. Two new programs joined the portfolio, and three programs are currently pending CNCS approval. Overall there are 381 AmeriCorps member slots among the formula and competitive portfolios. Roxanne Saunders added that outreach to potential AmeriCorps programs is currently underway in order to build formula programs up in order for them to apply competitively.

There is a match requirement to federal dollars, and the match level is based on the number of years that a program is in the portfolio or has received CNCS funds. It can begin at 24% and gradually increases every year to a maximum 50% by Year 10. ASC was instrumental in requesting that CNCS waive the match requirement for 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 for AmeriCorps programs. Match requirements remain intact for upcoming FY21 applications.

Analise Adams of the Virginia Service Commission presented the new AmeriCorps programs. She started an outreach team right before the pandemic hit and has conducted many outreach webinars in order to promote AmeriCorps and recruit new programs. The new programs are Educación Para Nuestro Futuro (EduFuturo), International Rescue Committee (IRC), City of Richmond, Virginia Tech, and Boxerwood Education Association, which is the new AmeriCorps Planning Grant.

In preparation for the 20-21 AmeriCorps program year, Roxanne reported that annual training events were held virtually for the first time. The Program Directors Training took place over two weeks in July, covering AmeriCorps 101 and 201 topics such as member recruitment, performance measurement, branding, and compliance. The AmeriCorps Launch/Opening Day offered training for AmeriCorps members in September and included the pledge of AmeriCorps members to serve, a keynote speaker, and developmental workshops on various topics. Life After AmeriCorps helped prepare members with professional development in May. Kimberly Brown of the VSC explained that there's funding allotted to technical and training support for AmeriCorps members. Life After AmeriCorps helps members develop soft skills and professional skills such as career building, resume building, and how to utilize their education award. The Virginia Service Commission virtually joined state service commissions from across the nation to attend the AmeriCorps Symposium and were presented with various workshop topics to support their programs.

Christina Dumas of the VSC reported on member survey results as of June 2020. This year's survey had about 25 questions, including questions about their experience before and after Covid-19, along with general compliance questions. A major takeaway from the survey was that an overwhelming majority of members heard about AmeriCorps programs through word of mouth. Another finding was that most programs were able to find alternative service activities so that their members were able to complete their service during the pandemic. Another key takeaway stressed how important it is for programs to be very clear about their expectations of members up front.

## **International Rescue Committee - IRC Virginia Refugee Services**

Roxanne introduced the new AmeriCorps program, International Rescue Committee (IRC) and presented IRC Executive Director, Harriet Kuhr as well as Kate Ayers, Executive Director of ReEstablish Richmond. Harriet reported that IRC is part of a large international humanitarian aid organization founded in 1933 at the request of Albert Einstein to respond to humanitarian crises and to help people survive and rebuild their lives. A refugee is a person who is unwilling or unable to return to their home country due to persecution. Another population served by IRC are Special Immigrant Visa holders (SIVs), which are Afghan and Iraqi nationals who were employed or contracted by or on behalf of the U.S. government or U.S. armed forces and have experienced or are experiencing an ongoing serious threat to that employment. IRC provides ongoing support throughout the refugee's first years in the U.S., including employment services, immigration services, medical support, school and youth programs, educational and interpreter services, and a food and agriculture program.

Kate Ayers of ReEstablish Richmond expressed excitement for a new partnership with IRC, who presented 3 of their 10 AmeriCorps members for ReEstablish to host. ReEstablish Richmond is a local organization which seeks to fill gaps in services and connect refugees and new immigrants to resources in order to establish roots, build community, and become self-sufficient.

Katie Heroux, AmeriCorps program director of IRC, presented a more detailed overview of the AmeriCorps program, beginning with member allotment to their programs: Economic Empowerment, Healthy Futures, Capacity Building, and Education. Katie introduced the 10 AmeriCorps members who are dispersed among three sites: IRC in Charlottesville, IRC in Richmond, and ReEstablishment Richmond.

## **Highlights of the Year Ahead**

Roxanne Saunders provided an overview of the structural transformations that have taken place in CNCS. Individual state offices were dissolved into regional offices across the country. The Mid-Atlantic region office is based out of Philadelphia, PA, and Lora Grady has been assigned Senior Portfolio Manager for that region. She and two regional administrators will offer technical support for the Virginia Service Commission.

Gail Doyle of the VSC informed the Board of new AmeriCorps branding in an ongoing effort to increase awareness of AmeriCorps and its opportunities to serve. The newly designed logo displays the branding of AmeriCorps more clearly across the various AmeriCorps state and national programs. In addition to a new logo, the AmeriCorps manifesto and messaging has been revamped in an effort to more effectively incorporate the message of calling people to serve.

Shannon Girouard reported on 2021/22 Funding Application processes. CNCS issued their notice funding opportunity for AmeriCorps state and national programming which kicks off the Competitive application season. After issuing a request for applications, one application was received and is currently up for review. Meanwhile for the larger more expansive Formula portfolio, the VSC will issue a request for application in the next couple weeks. Competitive and Formula applications are separate, so programs must apply to both to be considered for both types of funding. New operational and planning grant Formula applications for 2021/22 are now being accepted to use unexpended funds.

At 1:45 p.m. the Board proceeded to virtual breakout rooms for the subcommittee meetings. 2:30 p.m., the main board meeting reconvened.

## **Committee Reports**

### Program Committee

Ashley Hall reported that Formula funding has been approved for the City of Richmond, Virginia Tech, and Boxerwood Education Association (new planning grant). Approval by CNCS is pending. One Competitive grant is in continuation and is currently being reviewed. There will be a round of 15-20 Formula grants to be reviewed. Board members were encouraged to be a reviewer. Ashley also presented the new Chair for the Program Committee, Sheila Williamson-Branch.

### Communications and Special Events Committee

Mark Fero, Chair for the Communications and Special Events Committee, offered a recap on the AmeriCorps Opening Day Launch event in late September, 2020. There were 212 registrants who attended virtually. The Committee discussed updates on the Governor's Volunteerism Awards for 2020 and the upcoming awards for 2021. Due to the pandemic, the 2020 award ceremony was cancelled but award recipients were notified. There was discussion on possibly getting the Governor to recognize them somehow and have their awards mailed to them. Another idea discussed, with the situation depending, was holding an in-person ceremony outside for the 2021 award winners or hybrid of both in-person and virtual, and where the 2020 awardees could be recognized as well at the same event possibly. The upcoming 2021 Volunteerism Conference will be virtual from May 11-13 and staff are currently working on logistics such as acquiring speakers, swag and door prizes, exhibitors, etc. Gail Doyle added that staff are currently looking at various companies that would provide the virtual platform for the event, which focuses on three tracks: Volunteer Management, Capacity Building, and Personal/Professional Development. The Board was invited to offer suggestions for a keynote speaker, exhibitors, and sponsorships.

### Advocacy and Public Policy Committee

Kathy Spangler reported on conversations among the Advocacy and Public Policy Committee, following work done by former OVCS director Gail Harris and Julie Strandlie from their visit with the Congressional Delegation. Due to Jessica Bowser's absence, the Committee decided to hold off on electing a chair for the committee. Also discussed was the possibility of committees meeting in between board meetings. The briefing packets prepared for visits to the Hill will need to be updated with information from the new program year. Thank you notes to congressional delegation members will likely shift to electronic form and include an infographic that displays programs in their districts and encourages members to join the national service caucus. The Committee proposes potentially including board members to see if there exists any connection with the Congressional delegation members. Also discussed was possibly getting on the agenda for the Delegation for the Chiefs of Staff to talk about AmeriCorps and the programs in Virginia. A proclamation will be proposed to have the Governor recognize AmeriCorps Week. Also discussed was an op-ed strategy tied to that in order to get some third party talk leaders to talk of the power of service and have that placed in some major newspapers across Virginia---another way to amplify the message of AmeriCorps. Finally, discussion was had on how to correlate AmeriCorps Week, which is in the middle of March along with the legislative session, to build awareness amongst the Virginia General Assembly of AmeriCorps and the work that the Virginia Service Commission does each year.

## **Public Comment**

Mark Fero reported that the Virginia Service Foundation (VSF) has a new treasurer, and the donors for the 2020 Volunteerism Conference, which was cancelled due to the pandemic, have generously decided to not have the donated funds returned at VSF's offer. An audit is in the process of being completed. VSF looks forward to supporting the next round of Volunteerism awards as their purpose is to support the activities and training needs of the Governor's Advisory Board on Service and

Volunteerism and the Virginia Office on Service and Community Service. Mark clarified that VSF is not a government board but that of a private, nonprofit organization. There was no other public comment.

### **CNCS Mid-Atlantic Director Report**

Lora Grady, Senior Portfolio Manager of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), reported on the grantmaking that is currently being worked on. VISTA is now accepting concept papers for new projects four times a year. They are in the process of assessing the concept papers received for round one (1). When more information becomes available, they will share updates in terms of organizations that CNCS will start working with, as well as what areas and programming will be covered geographically. The next deadline for VISTA concept papers is January 1, 2021. Lora encouraged the Board to share potential good partners or those that would be a good recipient of VISTA resources. CNCS is also in the process of looking over 20/21 Competitive RSVP applications. The RSVP programs undergo competition every 3 years. It's expected to be released publicly in January for Virginia on whether the same set of grantees are re-granted or if any new programs are coming into the portfolio.

There are eight Days of Service grants across the Mid-Atlantic States. In Virginia, there is an organization that is a direct grantee for the 9/11 Day of Service: the United Way National. For the MLK Day of Service, there is no direct grantee in Virginia; however, grantee Arc National has selected a service site at the Arc of Harrison and Rockingham. CNCS is continuing to work with MLK grant recipients to figure out how to shift plans in light of COVID.

Adrienne Melendez, Regional Administrator for the Mid-Atlantic region (Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, Washington D.C., Virginia, West Virginia, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands), reported that the regional office opened in mid-September. Adrienne expressed excitement in their role to be a partner of the Virginia Service Commission and goals to amplify communication. In light of the presidential transition, the CEO of CNCS as well as staff members are political appointees and will most likely remain in place through January 23. In the meantime, there will most likely be some interim coverage/support. President-Elect Biden has identified a transition team under which CNCS lies along with the Department of Education. One of the representatives is former VISTA director Paul Montero who is familiar with national service--this is indicative of a smooth transition.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion has been one of CNCS's priorities. Adrienne highlighted three priorities that are being looked at: fostering an equitable workplace; recruit and retain diverse corps members; and promoting equitable grantmaking. The organization is working closely with their Office on Research and Evaluation to help meet those needs.

Lora Grady reported that there are four NCCC teams that are in place across Virginia with their current rounds ending on December 20. The projects involve trail clean up and maintenance at Natural Bridge, grave recording at African-American historic cemeteries in Richmond, VA, trail maintenance and upgrading signage at Manassas Battlefield Park, and another at USFS (Forestry Service) in George Washington and Jefferson national forest in Blacksburg. Pending are which organizations will be selected for the next two rounds. Lora also reported on a couple initiatives that have been ongoing--the first being Employers of National Service which helps recent service alums be aware of employers that recognize the value of a service term and how it brings additional experience and value from a potential employee. There's a growing list of over 600 organizations that have pledged themselves as employers of national service--this list can help recent service alums to narrow their job search. The second initiative is Schools of National Service which encompass colleges and universities that have agreed to match the AmeriCorps education award and waive the fee to apply to their programs. Also

included in this initiative among some academic institutions is giving academic credit for previous service experience. A launch campaign is in place to also promote this initiative, all in an effort to boost the value of the education award and the overall service experience. More information will be available to the public at the beginning of December.

### **Final Remarks and Reminders**

Julie Strandlie thanked everyone for attending the Board meeting and expressed hope in figuring out a way to have committee meetings in the interim.

Julie offered a motion to adjourn at 3:12 p.m. James Underwood motioned, Bryan Pearce Gonzalez seconded, and all were in favor.

Prepared by Jae-Young Choe  
Submitted by Kathy J. Spangler