



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

February 25, 2021; 9:30 AM to 1:00 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, Jenné Nurse, Bryan Pearce-Gonzalez, Seema Sethi, Julie Strandlie, James Underwood, Sheila Williamson-Branch, and Clifford Yee.

Board Members Absent: Lisette Carbajal, Omari Faulkner, and Leslie Van Horn.

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

CNCS Representatives Present: Lora Grady

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

The Board Meeting was called to order at 9:33 a.m. by Board Chair, Julie Strandlie. Julie introduced herself and invited introductions by Virginia Service Commission staff and Advisory Board members. Chair Strandlie called for the adoption of the November 19, 2020 meeting minutes. A motion to approve and adopt the minutes was made by Priscilla Martinez, Clifford Yee seconded, and all were in favor. Chair Strandlie then requested approval of the agenda. The motion to adopt the agenda was made by Elizabeth Childress Burneson, Bryan Pearce-Gonzales seconded, and all were in favor.

Chair Strandlie reported that she participated in the second virtual AmeriCorps Opening Day training event. She was also joined by OVCS director, Kathy Spangler for the General Assembly's rules committee hearing on HJ 543. The Chair informed the Board that former member Gina Lewis had resigned and that her seat was filled by Jamie Seagraves. Jamie is the Principal Grant Manager Associate for Community Affairs and Principal Engagement Strategist Associate at Capital One in Richmond, Virginia. The Chair highlighted some of his background work in community and national service, including his service as a member of the AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps from 2008 - 2009.

### **Report from the Director of the Office on Volunteerism and Community Service (OVCS)**

#### Interim State Service Plan

Kathy Spangler, director of OVCS, reviewed the Interim State Service Plan strategy. In an effort to update the State Service Plan, approval was granted by Lora Grady, Senior Program Officer of AmeriCorps, to draft an operational plan for 2021. The 5 goals and corresponding 9 objectives and 17 strategies relate to the current operational plan and are closely aligned with the 2017-2020 plan except for the last two goals of incorporating the VDSS VISTA Capacity Building Project, which is new, and conducting a comprehensive State Service Plan/Study during 2021. What is different now is that the

plan is focused on performance measures--either increasing targets or developing a baseline where none currently exists. Board member Bryan Pearce-Gonzalez asked if any thought had been given to doing any of this marketing/publicizing (social media) in languages other than English. Ms. Spangler replied that in the short term no, but that it will be incorporated into the long term strategic planning.

Chair Strandlie entertained the motion to adopt the 2021 Interim State Service Plan (see attached). Bryan Pearce-Gonzalez made a motion to adopt, with a language initiative to be incorporated in the future, and Elizabeth Childress Burneson seconded. All were in favor.

### Strategic Planning Process

Kathy Spangler updated the board on the Virginia Service Commission's (VSC) approach to developing their 2022-2024 State Service Plan. It's anticipated that the House Joint Resolution 543 or HJR 543 will pass, directing VDSS (Virginia Department of Social Services) to study ways to increase national service. VSC has just released an RFP (Request for Proposal) for a consultant to facilitate the strategic plan and study. Ms. Spangler outlined what the RFP calls for: 1) develop a planning framework and timeline for the Virginia 2021 – 2024 State Service Plan and Study; 2) conduct a comparative assessment of State Service Plans nationwide to identify “best practice” priority opportunities; 3) enlist a diverse set of national service and volunteerism stakeholders including geographic diversity and underrepresented groups to provide input and for selecting top priorities of the Plan/Study; 4) conduct a detailed study to identify the potential for and barriers to achieving priorities; 5) draft the final Plan/Study Recommendations report for consideration of the Governor's Advisory Board on Service and Volunteerism and Virginia Department of Social Services at the November 2021 meeting; and 6) complete a print-ready and electronic version of the 2021 – 2024 Virginia State Service Plan with a separate section of Study Recommendations in a final comprehensive report to OVCS/VSC for submission to the Governor and General Assembly no later than December 10, 2021. The VSC hopes to have a consultant firm in place by early May at the latest. The Advisory Board will be involved in this process and Ms. Spangler welcomed additional levels of engagement by any board member as the strategic planning process is implemented.

### **Vision for National Service in Virginia, presented by Dorothy McAuliffe**

Julie Strandlie introduced former First Lady Dorothy McAuliffe, who graciously accepted the invitation to share her vision for national service in Virginia. As a passionate promoter of national service, Mrs. McAuliffe's efforts led to Virginia becoming the first state to be named an “employer of national service,” prioritizing national service in its hiring decisions at all levels. Also, while First Lady, Dorothy led three separate state-wide convenings of higher education leaders, which inspired over 50 Virginia public and private colleges and universities to sign on to the Virginia Compact on National Service. After the Chair's introduction, Mrs. McAuliffe shared her perspectives for launching a new vision for national service in Virginia.

### Excerpts from Mrs. McAuliffe's Remarks:

*National service helps to bridge geographical, socio economic, and cultural divides. The history of national service in the U.S. is intimately linked to national crises, as its roots lie in programs like the Civilian Conservation Corps, which FDR used to demonstrate national service as a human capital solution to tackle urgent needs. In March of 1933, 13.6 million people were unemployed in the United States. In response, FDR created the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Over its 9 year run, the CCC employed more than 3 million men, built more than 40,000 bridges, planted 2 billion trees, restored 4,000 historic sites and structures, improved thousands of beaches, roads and shorelines, and created over 800 state parks across America---contributing greatly to local economies.*

*National service has played an even more critical role in addressing challenges at the local and state levels in face of the Covid-19 pandemic crisis. National service corps members are delivering food to*

*the hungry, conducting contact tracing and supporting vaccine distribution, tutoring students struggling to keep up with virtual school, and helping to meet many other community challenges. The strong local and state response to the multiple interconnected crises created a major momentum for new federal investments into national service. During this period, more national service bills were introduced in Congress than over the past decade combined. We expect to see \$1 billion for national service in the American Rescue Plan that is currently moving through Congress, doubling investment as a nation and representing the largest federal investment increase in over a decade. Increased funding in the next COVID recovery bill is anticipated, which could help place Virginia in a better position to be a model and leader in national service.*

*Virginia should consider the following as part of the planning process: leverage other public investments to build service year opportunities and solutions; cultivate a culture of service in the state by embedding service as a solution within state agencies and departments; incentivize service as a pathway to higher education; further develop a local and state talent pipeline through service; and invest in city and statewide service infrastructure and programming. The Board and Commission should be innovative and consider different viewpoints, sectors, and experiences – the private sector especially. The public-private partnership opportunities are fundamental to the ability to expand AmeriCorps and other national service opportunities in Virginia. The importance of equity in building these opportunities is essential. The stipends and educational credits given to service members often preclude many young people from lower income households from serving, which is why finding more resources and creatively utilizing college credits and financial aid are critically important to make sure all young people have the opportunity to serve.*

Chair Strandlie expressed appreciation to Mrs. McAuliffe for sharing her perspectives.

### **Volunteer Generation Fund**

Roxanne Saunders, AmeriCorps program manager and VSC staff, provided some background information on the Volunteer Generation Fund (VGF). VGF grants are typically used to develop and/or support community-based entities to recruit, manage, and support volunteers. In the past, the Commission sought out to fund effective approaches that expanded volunteerism, strengthen the capacity of volunteer connector organizations in order to recruit and retain skill-based volunteers, and develop strategies to use volunteers effectively to solve problems.

Analise Adams of the VSC presented some key issues of focus for the Volunteer Generation Fund to better understand the current volunteer landscape, and to better support, equip, and collaborate with organizations that engage volunteers and offer service opportunities. The program will focus on working with organizations of varying size and complexity, support organizations in offering high quality volunteer experiences, resulting in better preparing more organizations to engage more volunteers in high quality experiences that address the state's most critical needs. If there is stronger support and networking amongst nonprofit and service organizations, then more individuals will be engaged in high quality service experiences. Primary interventions of focus are systems development, training, and increasing resources for volunteer management.

Kathy Spangler expressed that securing funding through the Volunteer Generation Fund would accelerate the Commission's ability to actually implement the new strategic plan. The first year the proposal will focus on putting key "infrastructure" elements in place that would assist capacity building efforts that ensure Virginia's service and volunteer ecosystem is strong. If approved, during years two and three, it is anticipated that supporting efforts and programs to address key gaps identified through the strategic planning process could include grants to partner agencies. The match requirement for 2021 has been waived by AmeriCorps, which would allow the VSC to get started immediately and plan for match support in future years.

Chair Strandlie entertained a motion for Advisory Board approval for the Virginia Service Commission to submit an application for the 2021 Volunteer General Fund grant. Elizabeth Childress Burneson moved the motion, Mark Fero seconded, and all were in favor.

### **AmeriCorps Programs Update**

Roxanne Saunders reported that the VSC is in the middle of the annual Request for Applications (RFAs) process for Formula programs. Next year will be entering the 3rd year of the 3 year funding cycle for the Formula Prime award. There are 13 Formula programs with funding totaling \$3,627,573 in the current 2020-2021 program year. The Re-compete application for Competitive funds has been submitted on behalf of the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research. Notification regarding the application is expected in May. Applications funded in the Formula Placeholder competition in late 2020 are now under contract: City of Richmond Department of Parks and Virginia Tech with operational grants and Boxerwood Education Association with a planning grant. Reporting through December 2020, programs have collectively expended 28.4% of funds obligated. The VSC is on track for spending in the first quarter and is closely monitoring unexpended funds to ensure use as carryover funding in the Formula application process for 2021-2022.

### VISTA Integration

Kathy Spangler added that OVCS/Virginia Office on Volunteerism and Community Service took over VISTA in January 2021, with Samantha Lukasiewicz as VISTA program officer and Sasha Bronder as VISTA leader. Ms. Lukasiewicz explained that AmeriCorps VISTA is the national service program focused on capacity building, project sustainability, and anti-poverty work. Sasha Bronder added that AmeriCorps VISTA can be of any age and backgrounds vista members, making a one-year commitment to service full time while receiving a living stipend and other benefits. There are currently 14 VISTA members serving at local community action agencies and also at volunteer centers and VDSS and LDSS sites. Clifford Yee asked approximately how many VISTA slots are available nationally each year? Ms. Adams explained that there are other VISTA's in the Commonwealth of Virginia in addition to those in the VISTA project overseen by OVCS. There were 86 VISTA's in the past calendar year. The total number of AmeriCorps members in the state is available in the 2020 State at a Glance report:

[https://americorps.gov/sites/default/files/upload/state\\_profiles/pdf\\_2021/investment/VA%20Investment%20Combined.pdf](https://americorps.gov/sites/default/files/upload/state_profiles/pdf_2021/investment/VA%20Investment%20Combined.pdf)

Ms. Lukasiewicz continued with the VISTA roadmap for the future. Previously members were placed at community action agencies, which aligned with the VISTA program hosted in the CSBG unit at DSS. With the move to the OVCS office (also within DSS), there will be a new focus of building capacity of Virginia DSS, Local DSS offices, and Virginia Volunteer Centers. Currently the receipt of applications for project ideas by March 26th are underway, with an aim for 6-12 VISTA members to be requested. The team plans to submit a continuation grant to CNCS by late June with the new project information and in tandem will be recruiting members to start in October 2021.

### MLK Day

Gail Doyle: Due to COVID restrictions, AmeriCorps programs were unable to plan large in-person service projects for MLK Day on January 18th. Instead, many held virtual events, planned DIY projects, and conducted smaller-scale in-person projects. The Virginia Service Foundation awarded 6 Mini Grants to nonprofit organizations planning MLK Day Service projects. One of the awardees, Volunteer Fairfax, held a weekend-long volunteering event for families that had 1,500 participants -- more than doubling the number from previous years. Families distributed volunteer toolkits and collected nearly 800 lbs. of food.

### Program Highlight- Edu-Futuro

Ms. Saunders introduced Natalia Montelongo, director of programs at the Syphax Education Center in Arlington, VA and AmeriCorps program director of Edu-Futuro. Ms. Montelongo shared how EduFuturo focuses on empowering students, engaging parents, and transforming communities. Their mission is to empower immigrant and underserved youth and families through mentorship, education, leadership development, and parent engagement. Among the 2019 high school 4-year cohort in Alexandria City Public Schools, English Language Learner students comprised almost 20% of drop-outs, with over 16% of them Hispanic. Arlington and Fairfax County Public Schools reported higher rates among the same demographics.

Edu-Futuro currently has 15 AmeriCorps members who are involved in both youth leadership and workforce development activities. The Emerging Leaders Programs, free to immigrant students in grades 3 to 12, help develop the academic, leadership, and professional skills that will lead to college enrollment and professional success. ELP I (first track of Emerging Leaders Program) provides students in grades 9-11 with a toolkit of integrative, interdisciplinary, and transferable skills and strategies to support them in their path towards becoming leaders of their own futures. ELP II offers an intensive year-long one-on-one mentorship program for high school seniors. Parent Empowerment Services (PES) provide free classes, workshops, and case management services to students' parents, helping them to address issues that may be hindering positive family functioning, financial stability, and adjustment to life in the United States.

Members serve 85 students through weekly check-ins and monthly workshops. ELP II graduates received over \$2.48 million in financial aid and scholarships for their first year of college. The total amount projected for scholarships and financial aid obtained by the 2019-2020 ELP II participants for their four-year college education is \$5.54 million. As an AmeriCorps program, Edu-Futuro was able to expand from serving 45 high school seniors to 85.

The board then went into committee meetings at 11:53 am.  
At 12:23pm, the main board meeting resumed.

### **Committee reports**

#### Communications Committee

Communications Committee Chair Mark Fero reported that the committee primarily discussed the 2020/2021 Governor's Volunteerism awards and the 2021 Volunteerism and Service Conference. Aside from those two events, some other important events/dates are: AmeriCorps Week (March 7-13); National Volunteer Week (April 18-24); and National Service Recognition Day (April 6). Some important dates specific to the Virginia Service Commission (VSC) are: Life After AmeriCorps (June 4, 11, & 18), AmeriCorps Program Directors' Conference (July 26-30), and AmeriCorps Member Opening Day (September 24).

As it is not possible to meet in person, the Committee is looking into a video for award ceremonies for both the 2020 and 2021 awardees of the Governor's Volunteerism awards. The Communications Committee will seek a video production company to put a video together with music, photos, and also livestream capability. Gail Doyle added that the deadline for the 2021 awards is April 23, 2021, and the following week board members will serve as the judging panel for these awards. They will have two weeks to review and score the nominees.

The 2021 Volunteerism and Service Conference (virtual, May 11-13, 2021) early bird registration has begun. Leanne Constantinidis added that the company Aventri will provide a platform for the production and presentation of the conference. Keynote speakers are Allison Jackson and Dr. Janice Underwood. The event will feature 3 tracks: Volunteer Management, Capacity Building, and

Personal/Professional Development. The Virginia Service Foundation (VSF) will handle all paperwork for sponsors, of varying sponsorship levels, and conference scholarships. More information can be found here: <https://virginiainservicefoundation.org/whatwefund/virginia-volunteerism-and-service-conference/>

### Program Committee

Program Committee Chair Sheila Williamson-Branch reported that the RFA (Request for Application) for the 2021-22 formula funding was released in December 2020. Currently 16 applications have been received, and 15 met the risk assessment level. The Committee discussed the possibility of organizing a training event for board members to gain insights on how to review applications. Hopefully something will be presented in the fall. Operational grants have been awarded to Virginia Tech and the City of Richmond Department of Parks and a planning grant awarded to Boxerwood Education Association. The three sub-grantees are currently receiving training and support, completing required National Service Criminal History Checks and enrolling members. The Commission submitted an application for Competitive funding to AmeriCorps, the agency, on behalf of the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research, Dan River Year project, on January 4, 2021. Award notification is expected in mid-May. Virtual compliance monitoring and technical assistance reviews of sub-grantees are underway. Generally, members are accruing hours more slowly due to the impacts of COVID-19 on service activities.

The VSC staff is reaching out to a couple organizations on money they've been awarded to make sure they've been used in a feasible manner. Subgrantees will be asked to estimate and report the amount of unexpended funds for the 2020-2021 program year to the Commission in April. The Commission is encouraging programs to request modifications, including member slot conversions, to ensure maximum expenditure of grant dollars.

### Advocacy and Public Policy Committee

Kathy Spangler reported that the selecting of a Committee Chair will be delayed until the next board meeting. Meanwhile, the committee will meet in between today's board meeting and the next. The Committee discussed the larger goals of the committee, including outreach to elected officials, potentially aligning with AmeriCorps week. There will be more focus on communication with legislators. The committee will gather more information on potential boundaries to what the committee can do and with respect to the state service planning.

### **Virginia Service Foundation (VSF)**

VSF Chair Elizabeth Childress Burneson reported that the Foundation originally started to support this board with the primary objective to raise funds to support the annual Volunteerism and Service Conference and Governor's Volunteerism Awards. The VSF also issues mini grants and scholarships to the Volunteerism Conference. The VSF is currently seeking sponsors for the conference. Elizabeth encouraged recommendations from the board. The VSF also funded ASC memberships for the Virginia Service Commission.

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

Vanessa Diamond reported that she has just joined the ASC board as a commission member representative. She confirmed that ASC has been advocating for additional federal funding and that there are positive signs from the new administration that additional funding for AmeriCorps will be a priority. She encouraged board members to consider actively engaging with ASC as it provides a wealth of knowledge for commission staff and members regarding trends and best practices among the 52 state and territorial commissions.

## **Final Remarks / Adjournment**

Chair Strandlie solicited any public comments, which there were none. She shared with the Advisory Board the next 2021 meetings, which will also be virtual: April 22, May 20, September 23, and November 18. More information is forthcoming for the 2021 Volunteerism and Service Conference (May 11-13)--the website will be updated.

In closing, the Chair reminded board members who are up for reappointment this year. Ms. Spangler added that term information will be provided. Board members up for reappointment can be found here:

<https://www.commonwealth.virginia.gov/va-government/boards-and-commissions/appointment-openings/detail/?id=dfd6c5ed-c4c1-df11-8337-005056bc7b56#:~:text=The%20Advisory%20Board%20on%20Service,the%20Commonwealth%20and%20to%20meet>

The meeting was adjourned at 12:59 p.m.

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

Attachment: 2021 VSC State Service Plan