

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

Thursday, February 23, 2023, 10:00 am - 1:00 pm  
Tuckahoe Henrico County Public Library, 1901 Starling Dr, Henrico, VA 23229

Board Members Present: Clifford Yee, Julie Strandlie, Sheila Williamson-Branch, Adria Merritt, Cynthia Downs-Taylor, Bryan Pearce-Gonzales, Peppy Linden, Joy Parker, Jamie Seagraves

Board Members Absent: Naila Alam, Jessica Bowser, Vanessa Diamond, Mark Fero, Zachary Leonsis, Kimberly Luckabaugh, Priscilla Martinez, NaQuetta Mitchell, Enid Mpumwire Machayo, Reagan Polarek

Ex-Officios Present: Elizabeth Galaz (AmeriCorps), Carol Ayars (AmeriCorps Seniors)

Virginia Service Commission Staff Present: Kathy Spangler (Director), Analise Gammel, Jae-Young Choe, Samantha Lukaszewicz, Shannon Girouard, Kimberly Brown, Alexander Vanik, Alyssa Johnson

Guests: Alex Brito (CURE), Kasey Hayes (CURE), Andy Bates (SIR), Hannah Wittwer (Shalom Farms)

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The Board meeting was called to order at 10:12 a.m. by Board Chair Clifford Yee.

### **Adoption of Agenda and Minutes**

Chair Clifford Yee opened the meeting for the adoption of minutes from September 8, 2022. The motion to adopt the minutes was made by Bryan Pearce-Gonzales; Julie Strandlie seconded, and all were in favor. The floor was opened for approval of the agenda. Adria Merritt motioned to adopt the agenda; Peppy Linden seconded, and all were in favor.

### **Chair's Remarks**

Chair Clifford Yee thanked those who had completed the financial disclosure forms and training to ensure compliance across gubernatorially appointed boards. As for board members whose terms expire this June, they are required to resubmit their application online through the Secretary of the Commonwealth. Jessica Bowser and Zach Leonsis have fulfilled all their appointment cycles and will depart from the Board. Priscilla Martinez and Bryan Pearce Gonzales are eligible for two additional terms but must re-apply to be considered. Board members were reminded to work with Jae-Young Choe for mileage reimbursement for travel to the board meeting.

Chair Yee attended the ASC (Americas Service Commissions) Leadership Convening last week with Kathy Spangler. Held in Arlington, this annual event brings together state commission directors and board chairs to discuss AmeriCorps as well as the trends across the service and volunteer sector.

The executive committee met on February 10<sup>th</sup> and received a briefing on the brand and communications progress. Chair Yee expressed gratitude for the work of the committees and the progress being made because of their stewardship. He also thanked the commission staff for their professional leadership.

## **Mission Moment**

Chair Yee introduced Hannah Wittwer, Director of Volunteer and Education Services of Shalom Farms. Shalom Farms was awarded the 9/11 Day of Service Mini Grant in 2021 and 2022. This allowed them to purchase materials for specific projects like harvesting sweet potatoes. Volunteers had a great experience working on projects and appreciated doing service. In 2022 Shalom Farms used the grant to purchase crop curing shelves. Volunteers of all ages, abilities, and groups helped with distribution programs. Shalom Farms hosts roughly 5,000 volunteer visits each year, offering them service opportunities and educational programming. Volunteers drive the mission forward and allow them to grow over 200,000 pounds of food each year.

## **Committee Reports**

Vice Chair Sheila Williamson-Branch opened the floor to the Committee Chairs.

### AmeriCorps Committee

Committee Chair Adria Merritt provided an overview of the current solicitation timeline for AmeriCorps Formula grants for operational programs and planning grants in the 23-24 program year. On January 30<sup>th</sup>, the solicitation, or Request for Applications (RFA), was published in the state procurement portal. On February 10<sup>th</sup>, an optional pre-conference was held to respond to questions from interested applicants. The application deadline is March 7<sup>th</sup>. An evaluation panel will individually score applications and convene in small groups virtually on March 30<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> for consensus scoring led by VDSS Procurement. After a negotiations phase with potential subgrantees, complete applications will be sent to the AmeriCorps agency by the deadline of May 17<sup>th</sup>.

In preparation for the application review, Virginia Service Commission staff have developed a video series “Introduction to AmeriCorps Application Concepts” to acquaint reviewers with AmeriCorps program and application requirements. The series will be posted in the GAB Basecamp or sent directly to reviewers per the instructions from VDSS Procurement. The Commission is still in need of two additional panelists to review applications.

The Commission received notice from AmeriCorps of its Formula allocation for federal FY23 at \$4,573,963. An 18% increase from the previous year, these funds along with previously allocated Formula ARP (American Rescue Plan) dollars will be awarded through the funding solicitation.

Samantha Lukasiewicz and Shannon Girouard of the Commission will conduct a program and fiscal compliance monitoring site visit of the formula subgrantee, EduFuturo, in northern Virginia in early March. Alex Vanik and Samantha will attend and present on AmeriCorps service & staying engaged through volunteerism at the Active Citizens Conference at William & Mary in Williamsburg on February 25. The conference brings together students from across the country to learn about effective community engagement and contributing to positive change.

### Public Engagement Committee

Committee Chair Cynthia Downs-Taylor reported that the Public Engagement Committee assisted Commission staff in sending out the annual outreach letter during the first week of January to elected officials in the Virginia State Senate, House, and Congressional House representatives in order to make them aware of programs in their district. Over 20 responses were received with 17 requesting a follow up to set a date for a site visit. Three visits with elected officials are scheduled so far. Any board member interested in attending these visits can let Analise and the Committee Chair know. More outreach to

legislators is possible to set up site visits—increasing awareness in the General Assembly will help generate more support for AmeriCorps-related initiatives.

Registration for the 2023 Volunteerism Summit (May 9-11) is available now, and the Board is encouraged to share the news widely. Registration is \$75 for individuals and \$70 among groups of five or more. The Commissions aims to reach about 350 registrants, a slight increase from last year (318 in 2022). All Board members have been registered and if unable to attend, they can assign their registration to someone else who might benefit. Staff will be reaching out to board members soon about helping to introduce speakers and playing a role during the Summit.

#### Foundation Committee

Committee Chair Julie Strandlie reported that the Foundation Committee, comprised of both the Virginia Service Foundation Board of Directors and members of the Governor’s Advisory Board, met on February 9<sup>th</sup>. The Committee was briefed on the Virginia Service Foundation efforts to put a managed accounting firm services in place to assist in the administration of the sole source agreement with the State to implement the State Service Plan. The Foundation Committee is working on the development of a Board solicitation packet to strengthen the Virginia Service Foundation Board, and the Board will be asked to assist later this year to help recruit new members.

Sponsorship development has been underway for the Virginia Volunteerism Summit. So far 8 sponsorships have been secured totaling \$6,000. More sponsors are being sought to reach the goal of \$10,000 in sponsorships for the Summit. The Board was asked to share contacts or leads to help the Commission reach that goal.

In other news, 11 MLK mini grants were awarded in January and service projects were held across the Commonwealth. The National Service award applications are currently open through March 20—this opportunity has been expanded by allowing programs to nominate more than one member this year. The National Service Awards will be announced during the Virginia Volunteerism Summit. Lastly, the Foundation Committee was briefed by the brand and communications contractor as there are implications for the Virginia Service Foundation.

#### **State Service Plan Update**

Chair Cliff Yee reported that various projects associated with the State Service Plan have been in progress. Board members Peppy Linden, Vanessa Diamond, and Joy Parker have supported the work on the Virginia Community Engagement Index Core Team. Peppy is representing the Advisory Board, Vanessa is partnering with staff and the contractor, and Joy is representing healthcare perspectives on the Core Team. Chair Yee introduced contractor teams from SIR and CURE who have been working with staff and board committees to advance the work associated with the State Service Plan.

Andy Bates of SIR reported that when interviewing stakeholders during the State Service Plan process, a common theme was brought up: a lack of convening or unifying force in the service ecosystem. The new brand identity of Serve Virginia is an important step to better communicate the organization’s mission and goals and acts as a call to action to serve. The vision is to build a culture of service in all corners of the Commonwealth that mobilizes the people and resources to meet the needs of communities. The mission of Serve Virginia seeks to inspire individuals and organizations to engage, connecting them with the tools needed to make a difference and celebrating their impact throughout the Commonwealth.

Kasey Hayes of CURE presented the brand research development and new Serve Virginia logo which features a cardinal bird. The new website provides a pathway tool to “pair passion with purpose.” CURE also presented the mockup logo for the Virginia Service Foundation and the 2023 Volunteerism Summit. Alex Brito of CURE offered a view of the website in development and how it will provide information and tools for volunteerism, connecting people with resources for volunteering. The Pathway Tool is a way to help inspire someone into volunteerism areas, a goal reflecting data learned from Community Engagement Index Survey. In April a full working draft of the website will be available, and in May the website will be launched in time for the Summit with a call to action.

Andy Bates reported on the progress of the robust dataset of the Virginia Community Engagement Index Survey which closes on February 26. The survey data will place a lens on the benchmarks and the drivers of volunteerism and civic engagement, allowing for an analysis of what it means for the community and ways to make stronger connections among Virginians. Results from the CEI Survey will be presented at the Summit along with the launch of the new website.

### **Virginia Service Commission Report**

VSC Director Kathy Spangler reported that the Commission is now fully staffed, including a new VISTA leader and member. Samantha Lukasiewicz’s permanent role as Senior Program and Compliance Officer has also been finalized. The open AmeriCorps Program Officer position will soon be filled by former VISTA Leader Sasha Bronder. The new AmeriCorps VISTA Leader is Alyssa De Las Salas, and Lindsay Sundberg will serve as the Commission’s AmeriCorps VISTA Member.

### Virginia Volunteerism Summit

Analise Gammel reported that registration for the Summit is open. The new platform and format will capitalize on affordability and engagement to connect more people from across the state to hear inspiring keynotes and participate in practice workshop sessions. Over 40 national, state, and local experts will serve as speakers and panelists to over 300 attendees with 25 workshops designed to teach hands-on skills, facilitate lively discussion, and share information in an interactive format. There will be 3 inspiring keynote sessions and many opportunities for networking.

Modeled after the new Serve Virginia brand, the Summit’s theme will be pairing passion and purpose. The event will help launch and promote the brand, resource toolkits for partners, and the Virginia Community Engagement Index results. The Commission will solicit volunteers to help introduce speakers. Inquiries on the few opportunities remaining to coordinate some panels or workshops can be made to Analise Gammel. The Summit schedule is up on the registration page.

### Portfolio Performance

Samantha Lukasiewicz reported on efforts to monitor and encourage better program performance across the portfolio. The 12 programs currently in the portfolio are 1 Competitive subgrantee, 1 Public Health AmeriCorps subgrantee, and 10 Formula subgrantees which are comprised of 1 planning grant and 9 operational. Each program has different staff structures and number of members across different populations and geographical areas, so while there’s no one-size-fits-all way to work with each organization, there are certain benchmarks and standards AmeriCorps has for compliant and performing programs. In order to achieve a high performing portfolio, enrollment of awarded slots should be on-time and complete, enrolled members are retained, performance measures are achieved, and awarded funds are

spent in accordance with the approved application. This will be achieved by way of program officer check-ins, program team strategy, bi-monthly training calls, performance reports, and compliance monitoring.

Shannon Girouard presented the performance report on programmatic and fiscal measures that are periodically reviewed to monitor the progress of each subgrantee. These are federal benchmarks, apart from the performance measures and grant funds expended which are driven by the subgrantee based on their approved application for funding. The ability to formally assess these measures through a performance report provides an opportunity to advise and instruct, and to mitigate and correct in certain circumstances. The Commission is currently pulling data from the beginning of the program year through January for the performance report, and responses will be solicited from subgrantees on their progress related to each measure following the first week of March. This will enable them to concentrate on completing their 23-24 program year applications for AmeriCorps Formula funding.

#### Partner Development / CRM

Alex Vanik reported that the Commission is working closely with statewide networks to advance the goals of the State Service Plan with a special focus right now on the Summit. To increase the visibility of volunteer recognition programs, meetings are being facilitated for the Volunteer Center Network. Also a joint meeting is being planned with the Regional Capacity Builders to organize ideas around advocacy for the nonprofit sector and share information about AmeriCorps grants with nonprofits across the state.

The Commission is reaching out to college students and community partners through VA Engage, a network of college community engagement offices, with a special emphasis on connecting with students to boost AmeriCorps awareness and recruitment efforts. Alex and Samantha will have an outreach opportunity of presenting at the Active Citizens Conference at William & Mary.

The work of making new connections continues with organizations in rural communities, faith-based volunteering, and scouting. The Commission is also seeking organizations with the interest and capacity to run AmeriCorps programs. To more effectively record connections and interactions, the Commission has newly acquired a CRM (Customer Relations Management) tool, Little Green Light. It will allow for smoother contact sharing within the team and increased efficiency identifying partners to collaborate with on different projects.

#### Pipeline Project

Analise Gammel reported that the Pipeline Project has given staff time to work out a strong framework for the AmeriCorps pipeline project. The Commission is planning to enlist the services of Sam Sokolove, previous Executive Director of the New Mexico Service Commission and now Virginia resident, in order to develop a stronger pipeline of potential AmeriCorps applicants to strengthen the portfolio. While the focus is on cultivating applicants to join the portfolio, the Commission is working on a structure to help organize those interested in capacity building, alternative AmeriCorps programs, etc. along the way.

#### Elected Official Visit Coordination

There has been positive response from the elected official's outreach. Site visits with congressional representatives are a great way to educate them about the impact already happening in their district and making them aware of opportunities like joining the National Service Caucus to help support future national initiatives to expand and support AmeriCorps programs. Visits with state legislators are similar, but the Commission also hopes that by increasing awareness and familiarity, they'll gain traction in potentially partnering with them as legislative champions for service and volunteerism related policy

goals in the future. So far there have been 17 responses, 3 visits scheduled with the congressional delegation, and 2 tentative visits.

### **Partner Updates**

Chair Yee reported that Lora Grady has assumed the role of Acting Deputy Regional Administrator for the Mid-Atlantic region effective January 30. Elizabeth Galaz has been selected to serve as Acting Senior Portfolio Manager overseeing the Virginia/West Virginia team. Liz has been working with the Virginia Service Commission since last fall.

#### AmeriCorps Regional Office update

Elizabeth Galaz reported that the Mid-Atlantic Regional team has 4 portfolio managers across Virginia and West Virginia. The agency is currently busy with the grant competition review cycle, actively reviewing Public Health AmeriCorps opportunities and AmeriCorps State Competitive grants among others. There are several open funding opportunities. An upcoming concept paper deadline for those interested in VISTA is approaching on April 5 and another one in June. Any interested organizations are encouraged to contact Elizabeth Galaz.

Additionally, there is a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) related to tribes in Virginia, one through AmeriCorps National and another through AmeriCorps Seniors. The deadline is soon approaching on April 5, and more information on the process of applying is available on the AmeriCorps website.

Activities are being planned to help promote AmeriCorps Week (March 12-18) and recognize volunteers for their service. Additionally, the agency recently hired 2 new staff to help its focus on supporting organizations with member recruitment and growth.

#### ASC (Americas Service Commissions)

Chair Yee reported that Vanessa Diamond was unable to attend the board meeting today to provide an update. Vanessa serves on both the national boards of ASC as well as Points of Light. ASC is celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary and its work partnering with state commissions to help with advocacy on the federal and state level and with best practices. The Chair recommended that board members consider joining ASC as a member.

### **Public Comment and Adjournment**

Chair Clifford Yee opened the meeting of the Governor's Advisory Board for public comment, of which there were none. The next scheduled board meeting will be in-person in the Richmond area on May 18. The September board meeting is slated to take place in the Northern Virginia area. The meeting was adjourned at 12:35 p.m.

Prepared by Jae-Young Choe  
Submitted by Kathy Spangler