

Governor's Advisory Board on Services and Volunteerism

September 8, 2022; 10:00 PM – 1:00 PM
Patrick Henry Building, East Reading Room
1111 E Broad St, Richmond, VA 23219

Board Members Present: Naila Alam, Vanessa Diamond, Mark Fero, Peppy Linden, Kim Luckabaugh, Enid Mpumwire Machayo, Adria Merritt, NaQuetta Mitchell, Joy Parker, Reagan Polarek, Jamie Seagraves, Julie Strandlie, Sheila Williamson-Branch, Clifford Yee

Board Members Absent: Jessica Bowser, Lorna Campbell Clarke, Cynthia Downs-Taylor, Zachary Leonsis, Priscilla Martinez, Bryan Pearce-Gonzales

Virginia Service Commission Staff Present: Kathy Spangler, Roxanne Saunders, Analise Gammel, Christina Dumas, Kimberly Brown, Shannon Girouard, Jae-Young Choe

CNCS/AmeriCorps Mid-Atlantic Regional Office Representative: Lora Grady

AmeriCorps Seniors: Carol Ayars

The Board Meeting was called to order at 10:12 AM by Board Chair Julie Strandlie.

Adoption of Agenda and Minutes

The meeting was opened for the adoption of minutes from May 12, 2022 by Chair Julie Strandlie. The motion to adopt the minutes as amended with a correction to add official language at the conclusion of executive session section was made by Cliff Yee; Mark Fero seconded, and all were in favor.

The floor was opened for approval of the agenda. Sheila Williamson-Branch motioned to adopt the agenda; Cliff Yee seconded, and all were in favor.

Chair's Report

Chair Julie Strandlie introduced three new appointees to the Governor's Advisory Board on Service and Volunteerism. Joy Parker of Virginia Beach, serving in seat 18, is the director of volunteer services at the Children's Hospital of The King's Daughters. Kim Luckabaugh of Fairfax, serving in seat 8, recently became executive director of Reset180 and formerly worked at Volunteer Fairfax. Also the new youth/AmeriCorps appointee is Reagan Polarek of Richmond—she is currently studying at James Madison University.

As her term as Chair of the Governor's Advisory Board concludes, Julie Strandlie noted some highlights of the past two years: the completion of the State Service Plan; partnering with the Virginia Service Foundation to continue the annual Volunteerism Summit and Governor's Volunteerism and Community Service awards (presented virtually); and support for the 9/11 and MLK Service Days. The Virginia Service Commission and the Board worked to increase outreach despite COVID and hosted five elected officials at site visits this past year. Ms. Strandlie thanked the Board for the opportunity to serve as Chair over the past two years.

Election of Officers

The bylaw revisions last year rescheduled elections for the September meeting.

Vice Chair Vanessa Diamond thanked Julie Strandlie on behalf of the entire board for her leadership and commitment to the work and mission of the Board.

Ms. Diamond presented the slate of nominees for election as approved by the current Executive Committee at their August 12th meeting: For Chair of the Board, Clifford Yee and for Vice Chair, Sheila Williamson-Branch.

The executive committee also approved of name changes for the three committees to align better with the board's work plan. The new committee names and nominees to chair each are:

- Foundations Committee (formerly Communications and Events Committee) - Julie Strandlie, Chair
- AmeriCorps Committee (formerly Program Committee) – Adria Merritt, Chair
- Public Engagement Committee (formerly Advocacy and Policy Committee) – Cynthia Downs-Taylor, Chair

All candidates have accepted their nominations. Ms. Diamond invited additional nominations from the floor. There being none, Vanessa Diamond requested a motion and a second to elect the slate of candidates for the 2023 executive committee as presented. The motion was moved by Jamie Seagraves, seconded by NaQuetta Mitchell, and all were in favor. At this point, Cliff Yee assumed the Chair role for the meeting.

Committee Reports

Program Committee

Sheila Williamson-Branch reported on behalf of the Committee.

Formula Allocation: At the May 12 meeting, the Board provisionally approved grant award recommendations from the Program Committee. Since then, staff have been working on finalizing the Formula allocation grants for AmeriCorps. The Formula allocation was officially awarded on July 1, 2022; however, three organizations declined to accept their grant award for a variety of reasons. These awards, totaling \$331,300, are now part of a request to AmeriCorps to put in a placeholder grant for use in future cycles. Utilizing the supplemental formula- American Rescue Plan funds, additional funding was awarded including \$630,329 in cash match replacement to support the stability of the portfolio. All contracts have now been issued, and the Formula awards for the 22-23 year total \$5,104,558. Ms. Williamson-Branch proposed a motion to officially approve the formula grant awards as amended. Peppy Linden seconded, all were in favor, and the vote was in the affirmative.

AmeriCorps VISTA: The VISTA program continues to be strong. The 2021-22 program year is just now concluding. The VISTA summer pilot projects also recently concluded after ten members served over nine weeks with Aspire! - Learning Rocks Program, International Rescue Committee of Charlottesville - New Roots Program, Federation of Virginia Food Banks, and Fauquier Reaches for Excellence in School Health - FRESH Program.

The Commission Capacity Building Project has been approved for another year including: 13 Member Slots, One VISTA Leader Slot, 10 Summer Associate Slots, and \$15,000 for

supervision and transportation. Agreements have been executed with six organizations to place 13 VISTA members. As part of this project, the Virginia Service Commission will host one VISTA member to support strengthening communications and statewide networks along with a VISTA leader to assist in supporting the overall Capacity Building Project.

National Service Accelerator Grant: August 30th was the application deadline for this innovative two-year American Rescue Plan funded grant opportunity. A total of two applications were received and are currently under review by procurement and the review panel. The goal is to make these awards in October with a November 1st start date. Each recipient will complete a planning phase to prepare for a full operational grant period beginning next year this time. The goal is to increase the reach and capacity of the AmeriCorps program portfolio through this process.

Public Health AmeriCorps: George Mason University has been awarded a PHA grant in the amount of \$431,995 which represents 15 MSYs (members per service year) and 30 part-time AmeriCorps member slots. 30 part-time AmeriCorps members will work in teams to improve community connections and learn how to use data analytics to improve care communication, care coordination, triage, and patient surveillance across two communities in the Northern Virginia area. AmeriCorps members will increase referrals to health and social services for under/uninsured community members. This grant will be administered as part of the Virginia Service Commission's Competitive portfolio. Due to the off-budget cycle of this funding, a special appropriation had to be made with approvals by the Governor and General Assembly. GMU is on track for an October 1st start date.

A Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) from AmeriCorps was received for the next round of Public Health AmeriCorps and is scheduled to release an RFA (Request for Application) later this month for the 2023 grant award cycle. Also received was the NOFO for the Competitive Grant Program—the Commission is working to release this RFA by October. Ms. Williamson-Branch encouraged all board members to consider serving on a review panel for one of the three RFA's in process over the next four months, as they are a great way to fully understand the work of the Commission.

Communication and Events Committee

Cliff Yee reported on behalf of the Committee.

Governor's Volunteerism and Community Service Awards: Cliff Yee thanked those who served on the selection panel for this year's Governor's Awards program. The original proposed date for the awards ceremony was for September 8th, but after some delays to the process, the 2022 award ceremony has been approved for October 25th at the Governor's Mansion from 5:30 – 7:00 pm. Mr. Yee asked the board to mark their calendars to attend. Also in finalization are the invitation lists and notifications to Honorees in coordination with the Governor's office; therefore, the list of honorees are not yet able to be announced.

Marketing & Mini-grant Programs: With support from the Virginia Service Foundation, ten 9/11 mini-grants of \$250 were recently awarded for projects including arts projects, community beautification projects, and veterans programs. Over 30 applications were received.

The Commission's contractor SIR has been working on a communications audit to help consolidate their messaging and public positioning. With ARP funds, a part-time

communications support will be hired to manage the Commission's social media, website, and newsletters. Also in recruitment is for a VISTA member to assist with building capacity for statewide communications and partnerships.

Also in the works are plans for the migration of the AmeriCorps resource library for grantees to Basecamp. This project is necessary due to the need to update the platform of the website over the next six months. After many months of outreach, an old Virginia Service website that was at the top of search engine queries has been taken down. This should assist with the upcoming marketing and awareness building efforts.

Advocacy & Policy Committee: NaQuetta Mitchell reported on behalf of the Committee.

A fifth program site visit for the year was held in Charlottesville on June 20th in partnership with the AmeriCorps program at IRC (International Rescue Committee). The committee hosted Senator Creigh Deeds, Delegate Sally Hudson, City Councilwoman Sena Magill, as well as Dr. Fern Hauck from the Office of New Americans Advisory Board. Board member Peppy Linden as well as Kathy Spangler and Analise Gammel from the Virginia Service Commission were present. The goal for site visits has been met for the year, and more visits will be scheduled again in the fall, especially for 2023 Decision Day with the Virginia College Advising Corps next May.

The committee continues to focus on identifying and developing relationships with potential "legislative champions" to promote an emphasis on national service. With the board's assistance at the last meeting, a map of the existing relationships board members hold with members of the General Assembly has been drawn. The next step will be to consider House and Senate committee assignments and prioritize elected officials for targeted outreach in the fall. Also identified has been the importance of engaging other grassroots stakeholders to support outreach with elected officials, including faith communities and other state partners. The committee will meet in October to discuss the plan for targeted outreach with elected officials, general outreach to all General Assembly members, and plans for scheduling site visits in spring 2023.

Program Highlight: VISTA Project

Virginia Service Commission VISTA member Alex Vanik, who has been serving to build capacity among Volunteer Centers statewide, presented on the VISTA and capacity building program to the board (attached). In his role as Volunteer Center Network Coordinator, Mr. Vanik described how the project has sought to improve communications among volunteer centers, to map out and identify areas of Virginia served by volunteer centers and nonprofit capacity builders, and also to identify and understand best practices and models of volunteer management.

Updates

Virginia Service Foundation

Julie Strandlie reported that she and Vanessa Diamond were elected to the Board of Directors at the Foundation's annual meeting on August 24, followed by an election for Julie Strandlie to Chair the Foundation. Additionally, fellow board member Mark Fero was elected Treasurer.

Ten 9/11 mini-grant awards were approved. Also approved was up to \$16,000 of gap funding to support the completion of Phase I of the Civic Health Index, if needed.

A new agreement with the Virginia Service Commission is anticipated once their ARP (American Rescue Plan) administrative funding has been approved. To prepare for this funding, a new accounting system is being put in place to track all the funding for the state service plan project.

The Foundation looks forward to strengthening its relationship with the Governor's Advisory Board. Ms. Strandlie added that as she begins her term as Chair of the Foundation, priority goals for the year ahead will be to transition to the new accounting system, strengthen fundraising efforts, and fortify the Board with additional members.

AmeriCorps Regional Office

Lora Grady reported that AmeriCorps, a federal agency that provides funding for communities across the country, transitioned from a state to a regional structure two years ago. As a portfolio manager within the Mid-Atlantic Region, Ms. Grady works with Virginia and West Virginia to do grant making, outreach, and to help strengthen existing networks and find new partners.

The yearly AmeriCorps Grantee Summit wrapped up successfully last week. The 9/11 activities are wrapping up with various opportunities for people to volunteer including AmeriCorps leadership. As the end of the fiscal year approaches, the FY23 budget is yet unknown; however the president's request for the AmeriCorps budget shows continued confidence in the work and support for AmeriCorps state and national programs. The request is 1.34 billion and includes an increase for the coming year although it may be trimmed back as it goes through the legislative process. If fully funded, it is expected to support 75,000 AmeriCorps member slots across the country.

A number of NOFO's (Notice of Funding Opportunity) are currently open—the AmeriCorps state and national competitive NOFO will remain open until January 2023. Others currently open are the Public Health AmeriCorps NOFO and some planning grant competition, which will enter their review period in the spring. Also of note is the State and National Native Nations NOFO in an effort to engage more tribal partners. This will remain open until April 2023.

In an effort to seek more partners to show VISTA work, VISTA concept papers are currently in a period of solicitation through November 2. As AmeriCorps seeks to expand the VISTA portfolio in Virginia, Ms. Grady encouraged the board to learn more about the process should they know an organization that might be a good fit. An informational webinar will be held at the beginning of October. Ms. Grady can be reached via email for any possible help needed with registration or to simply be placed on an informational list: lgrady@cns.gov

AmeriCorps is adding positions specific to recruitment and support. In the coming months, feedback will be solicited from past AmeriCorps members or grantees in order to learn about impediments in terms of volunteering. Also in development is to expand recruitment for the AmeriCorps Senior Program as well as to increase NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps) engagement.

America's Service Commissions (ASC)

Vanessa Diamond reported that ASC, the national association for all state service commissions, share resources, advocates on the national level, provides training and technical assistance to staff, as well as access to various programming. ASC is also working with national funders in generating ideas in ways to fund the cash match as there is much potential nationally and statewide to help organizations match the funding they receive from commissions.

For their 25th anniversary, ASC is hosting the Innovation and Leadership Awards event virtually on September 22 from 7-9 pm. It is free to attend and a great way to learn about AmeriCorps and the work of other state service commissions.

Virginia Service Commission Update

Kathy Spangler reported that in her two years so far as director of the Virginia Service Commission, an important project has been the State Service Plan. Additionally, the VISTA capacity building project coordinated by Alex Vanik has made some groundbreaking landscape work on the volunteer side, and other VISTA member Shreya Gurung has been working on a DEI project to help programs across the Commonwealth develop ways in providing more inclusive and equitable work environments.

Aside from timing issues involving the funding of the state service plan, there have been some other challenges. The Commission is on a fixed budget, managing 8.5 million with about 6.5 million AmeriCorps-funded grants and about 2.5 million for the operations and administrative costs. Aside from funding from AmeriCorps (formula and competitive grants), Public Health AmeriCorps, and additional funding from the American Rescue Plan (ARP), the Commission also receives the Commission Support Grant (about 1.7 million dollars annually) which is matched 100% by the state, and the Commission Investment Fund for training and technical assistance. Additionally the Commission has also received ARP funding over a three-year allocation period for the administration of the office, also requiring a 100% match by the state. Because that is special funding, it had to go through a separate appropriation process, but the Commission was just notified that a portion of that money has been appropriated. It's taken a year to get the appropriation done, but now the Commission has the majority of funding for the State Service Plan to spend in the next 8 months, with an additional funding of \$270,000 to complete the work through FY 24.

Upon discovering that about 95% of the standard administrative budget was for salary, a process performed in conjunction with Human Resources this spring and summer placed the Commission in a position to reduce staff. Consequently, the part-time positions were eliminated, and the workload of various positions have been redistributed.

This workload includes managing the Public Health AmeriCorps grant and the next round of recruitment and application process. Due to ARP funding, the Commission has over 5 million dollars to manage and use in the portfolio of rounds. Another RFA was added, but so far only 2 applications have been received. Aside from outreach and generating interest in AmeriCorps, one thing that can help recruitment is a better explanation of challenges and details of the actual application process for an AmeriCorps grant. Federal and state regulations can be daunting for organizations to grasp.

The Commission learned last week that AmeriCorps Manager Roxanne Saunders is retiring after 32 years of service with the State. Roxanne will be retiring as of January 1, 2023, but will be taking leave beginning September 26th. The Commission is grateful for Roxanne's service and invites the Board to join in celebrating her after the board meeting. The team is working on re-alignment as a result of this news.

State Service Plan Update

Analise Gammel reported that in an effort to build connections and make an impact in communities as objectives in the State Service Plan, the Policy & Advocacy committee has been making strides in identifying legislative champions to further policy priorities. There was success in collaborating with programs to increase member living allowances last spring, and they will continue to educate stakeholders on the value of leveraging AmeriCorps incentives to further those priorities.

Outreach strategies to promote AmeriCorps, national service partnerships, and volunteerism awards are in development. The outreach strategy will adjust to better amplify the opportunities available across the state and meet the goals to increase geographic and program diversity. Much work has been placed into outreach to recruit for the National Service Accelerator Grant so that applicants know what resources are available in order to access the funding. With the Public Health AmeriCorps being released, partnering with stakeholders in the state and in higher education has been in development. AmeriCorps outreach considers what combination of AmeriCorps programming could best suit the unique needs of communities. Efforts are being made to strengthen partnerships and cohesion across the sector, not only in AmeriCorps outreach but also to support other State Service Plan deliverables, participation in Summit and awards programs, and overall greater presence of service and volunteerism statewide.

The Commission has also been working with contractor SIR to scope the contracts and begin the work on the awareness campaign and the civic health measurement project, aligning the efforts to make a greater impact. Partners including AmeriCorps and Points of Light are excited to participate in the core research team, and there is a robust partnership structure proposed to achieve engagement in the project from across the volunteer ecosystem. The awareness campaign will amplify the civic health project as well as service and volunteerism to make a greater impact and build greater readiness before the campaign launch in 2023.

Ms. Spangler emphasized that the Civic Health Index is going to be a useful tool for local regional and state decision makers to invest their resources to strengthen the infrastructure in their communities. Having Points of Light and AmeriCorps collaborating with the state commission and its contractor to develop a new model—perhaps first in the country—for how we measure civic health is a source of great excitement.

Kathy Spangler announced that the Commission is in planning mode for the Governor's Volunteerism Awards Ceremony on October 25th at the Executive Mansion. More information on that and also regarding the 2023 Volunteerism Summit will be announced soon. Orientation meetings will be scheduled over the next month with the new board members, and the Commission will be accelerating their work to move forward with plans.

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 is on December 8, 2022.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:38 p.m.

Prepared by Jae-Young Choe
Submitted by Kathy Spangler

Attachment: Presentation on the Volunteer Center Network Capacity Building VISTA Project