

Governor's Advisory Board on Service and Volunteerism

September 26, 2024, 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM

5600 Cox Road, Glen Allen, VA 23060

Board Members Present: Kim Luckabaugh, Clifford Yee, Joy Parker, Debra Rapone, Clifford Yee, Jason Ascher, Clovia Lawrence, Dominick Rascona, Joel Morgan

Board Members Absent: Reagan Polarek, Shane Roberts-Thomas, Adria Merritt, Mark Creason, Sam Parham

Ex-Officio Members Present: Carol Ayars

Virginia Service Foundation Members Present: Julie Strandlie, Sheila Williamson-Branch, Maggie Bowman, Clifford Yee

Serve Virginia Staff Present: Kathy Spangler, Analise Gammel, Alexander Vanik, Jae-Young Choe, Samantha Lukasiewicz, Sasha Bronder, Kimberly Brown, Sarah Lawson, Christina Dumas, Mackenzie Vuotto (VISTA), Elizabeth Richardson (VISTA)

Guests: Andy Bates (SIR)

The Board Meeting was called to order at 10:04 AM by Board Chair Clifford Yee.

Adoption of Agenda and Minutes

Chair Clifford Yee called for the adoption of minutes from May 21, 2024. The motion to adopt the minutes was made by Joel Morgan, Joy Parker seconded, and all were in favor. The May 21, 2024 minutes were adopted.

Chair Clifford Yee called for the approval of the agenda. Kim Luckabaugh motioned to adopt the agenda, Joel Morgan, and all were in favor.

Chair's Remarks

Chair Cliff Yee welcomed newly appointed board members Aaron McClung, Joel Morgan, Mark Creason, and Debra Rapone. The Chair also welcomed reappointed board members Joy Parker, Kim Luckabaugh, Adria Merritt, and Clovia Lawrence. Six more appointments are anticipated soon. The Chair welcomed the meeting members of the Virginia Service Foundation Board (VSF), a closely aligned 501c3 nonprofit that supports the Virginia Service Commission's work. Cliff Yee announced the conclusion of his term as Chair and thanked the Board for the opportunity to serve in that role for the past two years. The Chair then presented the Presidential Service Award to former board member, Sheila Williamson-Branch.

Mission Moment

Chair Cliff Yee invited AmeriCorps VISTA member Mackenzie Vuotto to share with the Board her experiences during her VISTA year. Vuotto joined the Serve Virginia team last October to support the work of bringing the Virginia Community Engagement Index to life in Virginia communities, supporting the implementation of a grassroots pilot project which created and identified resources for stronger civic engagement and volunteering. She recently completed an asset map of organizations in the Commonwealth working towards policy change in a variety of

areas of need. This map includes over 60 resources that individuals can engage with as well as actions they can take to support their communities. Mackenzie Vuotto has been inspired to commit to another year of service as VISTA Leader beginning in October.

Serve Virginia Overview

Serve Virginia Director Kathy Spangler gave an overview of the Commission's work to inspire and celebrate volunteering, national service, and civic engagement in Virginia. The purpose is to believe in the power of service and volunteerism to spark change, strengthen lives, and produce lasting impacts for communities throughout Virginia. The goal is to inspire more Virginians from all parts of the Commonwealth to engage in service and volunteer experiences to reduce disparities and meet our communities' most pressing needs.

Key Strategies

The implementation of a state service plan every three years is a requirement of the Commission's federal funder, AmeriCorps. The current State Service Plan, which concludes at the end of this year, has been a guidepost for the progress and efforts made over the last three years. The Commission accomplished implementing the three interrelated strategies:

- 1) Build a stronger culture of service, volunteerism, and civic engagement through policy change, the Virginia Community Engagement Index (VCEI), awareness, recruitment, and recognition.
 - Increased the AmeriCorps Living Allowance; Increased awareness among elected officials; Launched the Virginia Community Engagement Index and developed the SERVE Framework; Rebranded Serve Virginia.
- 2) Build a more representative, integrated, and aligned network of partners through the Virginia Service Commission (VSC) as convener & catalyst, equity advancement, and Governor's Advisory Board empowerment.
 - Built a statewide network of partners; Increased partner engagement in initiatives; Increased access to knowledge, training, and technical assistance.
- 3) Build a more robust resource and support infrastructure through private and public investment, capacity-building and program development, and stakeholder mobilization and engagement.
 - Utilized resources to invest in the AmeriCorps pipeline project to expand outreach; Increased response to AmeriCorps RFAs (request for applications); Investment of AmeriCorps VISTA in building capacity for organizations.

Programs and Communications

Serve Virginia engages audiences through the monthly newsletter, the ServeVirginia.Org website, and social media channels on the latest events, tools, resources, and more.

Opportunities are promoted to recognize individuals through sharing stories of service and the Governor's Awards on Volunteerism and Community Service. In addition to the evergreen tools and resources on the website, Serve Virginia facilitates the mini grants process in partnership with the Virginia Service Foundation to help local projects held in honor of National Days of Service (MLK and 9/11).

AmeriCorps Portfolio

AmeriCorps Manager Samantha Lukasiewicz reported that Serve Virginia partners with the federal agency AmeriCorps as a pass-through entity for federal funds to several organizations across the Commonwealth. Each year a request for applications (RFA) undergoes a few

competitive processes. The current portfolio includes planning grants and operational grants. Planning grants are for organizations who are interested in AmeriCorps but would like additional assistance in planning a program or programs before applying for operational funding. In addition, planning grants can use this time to determine the best fit for their organizational capacity and needs. Operational grants are those organizations who support AmeriCorps members that do direct service. Direct service includes tutoring and mentoring youth, building trails, and facilitating financial literacy, among other activities that work directly with beneficiaries.

AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America), the Virginia Capacity Building Project, is an intermediary project that works with different departments within the Department of Social Services and nonprofit organizations who apply for VISTA members in the spring. AmeriCorps VISTA members do capacity building activities like working on marketing plans, fundraising plans, and volunteer management. Serve Virginia manages 13 VISTA Members and a VISTA Leader. NCCC, National Civilian Community Corps, is not managed by Serve Virginia but is a partner through a Memorandum of Understanding. It's an AmeriCorps program which engages 18- to 26-year-olds in team-based, residential community service projects across the United States.

AmeriCorps has six key focus areas to make an impact in communities: Disaster Services, Economic Opportunity, Education, Environmental Stewardship, Healthy Futures, and Veterans and Military Families.

Planning Grants

Program Development Officer Alexander Vanik reported that Serve Virginia has its largest class of planning grants this year, with a \$2,291,453 investment in eleven planning grants focused on developing AmeriCorps programs to address a range of community needs including mental health, access to workforce and education pathways, math and literacy tutoring, and long-term care. This will be an opportunity for them to build service-to-career pathways and explore other strategies which leverage volunteers and mobilize the community's resources.

Operational Grants

Samantha Lukasiewicz reported that there are currently a total of 12 operational programs for the 2024-2025 program year that recruit, enroll, and support over 300 AmeriCorps Members. Among the programs is one competitive program, UVA College Advising Corps, which has competed at the national level with other programs for direct federal funding. Two other programs are Public Health AmeriCorps programs, who had applied directly to the Commission and are funded through American Rescue Plan dollars. The remaining nine are formula programs that had undergone a Virginia-specific competitive process. Serve Virginia acts as a pass-through entity for all of these organizations, receiving the grant award from the federal agency, AmeriCorps, and being responsible for providing training, resources, monitoring, reporting, and reimbursing their allowable costs. Each operational program is assigned a program officer, Kimberly Brown and Sasha Bronder, and is also supported by the fiscal officer, Christinia Dumas.

VISTA Project

AmeriCorps Program Officer Sasha Bronder reported that the Virginia Capacity Building Project engages 14 full-time AmeriCorps VISTA Members to serve with partners across the Commonwealth. Members focus on capacity building—helping their host sites to assess,

innovate, and evolve in ways that would be impossible without the support of a VISTA member. Some goals of VISTA members serving this year include: building up volunteer infrastructure to create a culture of volunteerism and amplify the valuable work that nonprofits do every day; collecting invaluable on-the-ground data to support strategic, evidence-backed solutions to their communities most pressing needs; researching and implementing innovative programming to ensure that social services are accessible to the people who need them most; and engaging with funders and stakeholders at every level to secure a robust and highly informed support network of champions. In addition, all Serve Virginia's VISTA members are partnering with 211 Virginia to build and promote a comprehensive state-wide information and referral system.

NCCC Programs

Statewide Engagement Officer Analise Gammel reported that the National Civilian Community Corps supports organizations that don't have the capacity or need for a year-round AmeriCorps program. Teams travel to communities to address a specific project for 3-6 weeks to create a tangible impact. NCCC has served in Virginia on a variety of different projects which include building affordable housing with Habitat for Humanity, assisting in local, state, and national parks and forests to mitigate the risk of wildfires and protect at risk eco systems, and partnering with FEMA to prepare materials for deployment in times of disaster or crisis.

Virginia Service Foundation

Kathy Spangler reported that the Virginia Service Foundation (VSF) is an independent 501c3 nonprofit organization closely aligned with Serve Virginia's work and exists to support the service commission. VSF provides resource support for the Governor's award program and Day of Service mini-grant programs and is also the registration engine for the annual volunteerism summit. In addition to support from a managed accounting firm, the Serve Virginia team provides administrative support to the Foundation. VSF has an official MOU with VDSS which allows the Commission to designate funding for reimbursement. For example, recently approximately \$902,000 of American Rescue Plan and state match funding have been fulfilling many of the items in the state service plan. A significant portion of this funding was managed by VSF with external contractors.

Many of the VSF board members have served on the Governor's Advisory Board during or following their term with the Foundation, and some of them are AmeriCorps alumni. Serve Virginia has recently secured a VISTA member, Elizabeth Richardson, to focus on building capacity for VSF to assist with expanding initiatives in future years.

2024-2025 Calendar

The Governor's Advisory Board typically meets in-person three times a year and for special projects where board members engage in support of the Service Commission's work. The next meeting will be a work session on November 20, 2024, from 2-5pm at the Patrick Henry Building, followed by the Governor's Volunteerism & Community Service Awards from 5:30-7:00pm at the Executive Mansion. The remaining board meetings take place on February 26, 2025, and on May 22, 2025, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Among the various optional events, the next one is the AmeriCorps Member Launch on October 16, 2024.

Officer Elections

Outgoing Chair Cliff Yee presented the candidates for election. Per the Advisory Board bylaws, officer elections are typically held in September. These individuals serve for a year at a time. The

candidate for Chair is Joy Parker and for Vice Chair Kim Luckabaugh. Each candidate has accepted their nominations. Cliff Yee invited any additional nominations from the floor. There being none, Yee called for a motion and a second to elect the slate of candidates for the 2025 Board leadership as presented. The motion to elect the slate of candidates for the 2025 Board Leadership as presented was moved by Joel Morgan, seconded by Aaron McClung, and all were in favor. The vote was in the affirmative for the newly elected officers.

Policy Project Update & Planning

Incoming Chair Joy Parker presented Andy Bates of contractor SIR (Southeastern Institute of Research) to the Board to provide an overview and context for the policy change targeted action. Andy Bates provided the policy background for the State Service Plan. Strategic plans are required of service commissions every three years. However, in 2021, the Virginia General Assembly added pointed emphasis to research and planning efforts through House Joint Resolution No. 543, which tasked Serve Virginia with assessing specific opportunities for increasing participation in national service. As part of the stakeholder engagement and strategic planning outreach efforts, nearly 400 stakeholders were asked to rate how effective and feasible these strategies would be at increasing participation in national service.

Stakeholder findings were examined through S.I.R.'s "opportunity map" lens, where correlations between effectiveness and feasibility ratings were used to "scatterplot" results into four "quadrants of opportunity": Long-term growth opportunities; Near-term growth opportunities; Immediate reinforcers; and Back burners. To capitalize on growth opportunities, several key questions needed to be answered: What have other states successfully implemented? What actions did they take? What potential benefits could be realized by implementing similar measures here in Virginia? What would be the financial commitment required? Knowing that awareness building will be key to any near- or long-term growth, Serve Virginia immediately implemented best marketing and communicating practices. The process of policy development involved a secondary landscape assessment, interviews with several state commissions across the nation, and cost-benefit analysis.

Andy Bates shared with the Board the key findings learned from other states:

- Current programs offer clues: The best workforce development, pipeline, and credentialing initiatives stemmed from a thorough re-evaluation of their state's program portfolios for existing opportunities rather than "starting new."
- Organizational structure matters: Those who are housed at the cabinet level have a direct "in" for budget appropriations and generating high-level buy-in with state agencies like DOE, DOH, etc. Meanwhile, those who operate as separate 501c(3) nonprofits have freedom and flexibility to fundraise and advocate.
- Measuring ROI and impact can be "murky": Many states freely admitted that measuring success wasn't something they had quite figured out yet, as opportunities to assess can take many forms (e.g., member career exit data, number and frequency of applications for AmeriCorps positions, Segal award spending, etc.).

Based on these findings, Serve Virginia is advocating that intentional investment in National Service can grow Virginia's talent pool, strengthen workforce development pipelines, and meet the challenges of communities throughout the Commonwealth. More specifically, tax exemption for both the Segal Education Award and the Living Allowance are being advocated, along with in-state tuition assistance for service members and dedicated state appropriations to offset match

burden on organizations hosting members and support new program development and service-to-career pipeline initiatives. Lessening the tax burden to make the AmeriCorps membership more attractive and viable will cost the state very little, while opening a potentially substantial pool of attractive job candidates and students looking to continue their education. Virginia is at risk of continuing to fall behind other states when it comes to offering an attractive incentive package.

Chair Joy Parker asked the Board to contact either her or Kathy Spangler if interested in being part of a working group for policy change with the Foundation. The goal is to educate elected officials about the service-to-career benefits of AmeriCorps and encourage their understanding of what policies can strengthen the AmeriCorps efforts overall.

State Service Plan Update

Kathy Spangler announced that Serve Virginia will keep the original purpose and primary goals with minor wording adjustments for the 2025-2027 State Service Plan. The momentum of the current plan will be built upon, the three interrelated strategies will be retained, and the targeted actions to reflect the progress made and new understanding of what is possible will be modified.

The targeted action areas for Strategy 1 to Build a Stronger Culture of Service, Volunteerism & Civic Engagement will be: 1) Policy Change; 2) Virginia Community Engagement Index & SERVE Framework; and 3) Awareness, Recruitment & Recognition.

The targeted action areas for Strategy 2 to Unite a More Representative, Integrated & Aligned Network of Partners will be: 1) Coalescing for Collective Impact; 2) Prioritize Workforce Development through AmeriCorps; and 3) Leadership Cultivation & Engagement.

The targeted action areas for Strategy 3 to Create a More Robust Resource & Support Infrastructure will be: 1) Private Investment and 2) Capacity Building & Program Development.

Partner Updates

Virginia Service Foundation

VSF Chair Julie Strandlie highlighted a few initiatives of the Foundation. Of the forty-nine applications received for the 2024 9/11 Day of Service Mini Grants, 12 out of 18 high-quality applications were funded up to \$250 each. Given this, consideration should be given to expanding the Mini- Grants program to fund 15-20 applications per cycle in the future.

To accomplish this, the VSF Chair invited all board members to make a tax-deductible contribution to the Virginia Service Foundation to support this effort. As the applications for the MLK Day of Service Mini Grants will be launched tomorrow, Strandlie encouraged the Board to consider promoting this opportunity to organizations they know and consider making a contribution of \$250 to fund one of the mini grants.

The Foundation is excited to launch the policy project and looks forward to working with the Governor's Advisory Board. The Foundation is also pleased to support the Governor's Awards and many of Serve Virginia's communications capacities. Additionally, board members who know anyone possibly well suited to join the Virginia Service Foundation's effort are encouraged to forward nominations to the VSF Board.

AmeriCorps

The AmeriCorps Agency representative Jillian Winters was unable to attend the Board meeting; however, a written report was provided to the Board (see attached).

Public Comment and Final Remarks

Board Chair Joy Parker opened the floor for any public comment, of which there were none. Kathy Spangler reminded the Board to complete the Commitment Agreement form in their packet to indicate in what areas they'd like to be engaged in the Advisory Board's work in fulfilling its mission (see attached).

Close and Adjourn

The Chair notified the Board that they will receive an invitation to a working session on the state service plan and policy project on November 20th from 2-5 p.m., which will be followed by the Governor's Volunteerism and Community Service Awards at the Executive Mansion on November 20th from 5:30-7:00 pm. Additional details will be forwarded as they are finalized.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:52 p.m.

Prepared by Jae-Young Choe
Submitted by Kathy Spangler