

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

May 20, 2021; 9:30 AM – 1:00 PM

VIRTUAL

Board Members Present: Lily Beres, Jessica Bowser, Vanessa Diamond, Ashley Hall, Zachary Leonsis, Jenné Nurse, Bryan Pearce-Gonzalez, Jamie Seagraves, Seema Sethi, Julie Strandlie, James Underwood, Leslie Van Horn, Sheila Williamson-Branch, Clifford Yee

Board Members Absent: Lisette Carbajal, Elizabeth Childress Burneson, Omari Faulkner, Mark Fero, Tyee Davenport Mallory, Priscilla Martinez

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

CNCS/AmeriCorps Regional Representatives Present: Lora Grady

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The Board Meeting was called to order at 9:33 AM by Board Chair, Julie Strandlie.

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

The floor was opened for the adoption of the minutes from the meeting on February 25, 2021 by Julie Strandlie. The motion to adopt the minutes was made by James Underwood, Clifford Yee seconded, and all were in favor. The floor was opened for approval of the agenda. Clifford Yee motioned to adopt the agenda, James Underwood seconded, and all were in favor.

### **Director's Report**

Julie Strandlie opened the floor to Kathy Spangler, Director of the Virginia Office on Volunteerism and Community Service (OVCS). Kathy reported that the procurement phase for the State Service Plan and Study has been completed, and the bid was awarded to Southeastern Institute of Research (SIR) as the consultant for this project. They will be working with the Virginia Service Commission (VSC) throughout the year to help develop a three year strategic plan, conduct consumer research, and to align organizational design to meet future trends. A timeline is being set, and core project groups are being aligned. Some board members have already been contacted to participate on the Steering Committee, and others will be reached as project groups develop.

Kathy updated the board on the VISTA integration since the Department of Social Services (DSS) moved oversight of the Vista Capacity Building Project from the Community Services Block Grant team to OVCS effective January 31, 2021. The transition has been seamless, and four other DSS departments along with the Virginia Service Commission have submitted requests to be part of the project for 2022. The projects include: DSS Substance Use Initiative to strengthen resources statewide; DSS Office of Innovation & Strategic Initiatives for projects to reduce poverty and food insecurity; DSS Childcare and Early Childhood Development to increase the number of Child Care subsidy program providers in underserved areas; DSS Human Services Unit to expand the capacity of the SNAP Restaurant Meals Program to serve low income elderly and those unable to shop for groceries or cook food on their own; and the DSS Office of New Americans to improve the statewide network for providing immigrant services. The Virginia Service Commission will have two projects--to strengthen the Volunteer Center Network statewide and to assess the landscape for diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives across the service sector statewide. A total of 14 VISTA members and 1 VISTA Leader have been requested for the

next year. The continuing application will be submitted over the next couple of weeks and will begin the recruitment process thereafter.

Roxanne Saunders (AmeriCorps Program Manager) and Kathy have been working with the National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) regional office to activate a team in the Roanoke area to provide vaccination support. They are also in conversations with Delegate Delores McQuinn to secure a team to serve at the Richmond Slave Trail and at Fort Monroe to support efforts around the historic state facility. Separately, NCCC also is considering potential projects at Douthat State Park, Shenandoah National Park, Enrichmond Foundation and the City of Norton.

As for the bylaws, since all of the members of the Advisory Board are appointed by the Governor, this body can't take action for members who don't participate in board meetings. However, the Board meeting attendance records are periodically shared with the Governor's office for their consideration when making appointments. Kathy reminded the board members whose term is expiring yet wish to continue on the board to submit their request online for the Governor's appointments.

After reviewing the bylaws and discussing with Board Chair Julie Strandlie, Kathy Spangler made the following recommendations to the Board: 1) clerical issues associated with formal changes from CNCS to AmeriCorps and from state to regional office structure need to be made; 2) under Article VI, officers have not been following the bylaws and there are four issues to discuss:

*a) First, the bylaws state that officers shall be elected annually by members of the board for a term of one year beginning July 1st. Given that appointments are generally made by June 30th, or sometimes later, I would like the board to consider officer elections at the fall meeting so that new board members can receive an orientation and participate in officer elections; b) Second, #2 states that nominations shall be taken from the floor during its first meeting of the State Fiscal Year. This is already in conflict with #1 as written given the fiscal year begins July 1st. I propose that we adjust the bylaws to solicit nominations at the Spring meeting and finalize the slate by August 1st to avoid any candidates not being re-appointed to the board; c) Third, we have not had a vice-chair in recent years. Does the Board want to maintain the vice-chair position or delete it? D) Lastly, the bylaws state that Officers may hold the same office for no more than two consecutive years. An election for officers was not held in 2020 and Julie continued to serve in this role. Technically, she has only been elected once.*

Kathy asked the Board to determine whether the bylaws need to be adjusted to specify that an officer can be elected for two consecutive terms (one year) vs. hold the same office for no more than two consecutive years. Given the bylaws, official action will be taken on any proposed changes at the July board meeting, but Kathy opened the floor for discussion to provide guidance for how to prepare the bylaw recommendations. Board Chair Julie Strandlie reported that the Board previously had a vice chair and expressed support for having one again. Board Member Vanessa Diamond agreed. Kathy asked the Board to contact her to express interest in serving as Vice Chair. Julie reminded the board to submit material if their term is expiring on June 30. Clifford Yee and Julie Strandlie volunteered to assist Kathy in preparing a revised set of bylaws for board consideration at the July meeting.

#### **AmeriCorps Program Highlight: Virginia College Advising Corps**

Chair Julie Strandlie introduced Joy Pugh, Executive Director of the Virginia College Advising Corps. Under Joy's leadership, the Virginia College Advising Corps has tripled the number of college advisers serving across the Commonwealth and now provides exceptional near-peer mentoring and college advising to 48 high schools and almost 10,000 seniors annually.

Joy Pugh introduced the Virginia College Advising Corps program, stating that its mission is to increase the number of low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented high school students who enter and complete higher education. Virginia College Advising Corps addresses structural inequities in the education system that have systematically advantaged some populations over others and seeks to understand how these historical injustices continue to impact current opportunities and outcomes. The program advocates for low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented students, and believes that access to higher education is paramount to racial and economic equity.

The program offers near-peer advising from recent college graduates in high school sites who serve full-time the entire school (not a cohort). Caseloads range from 50 – 700 seniors with an average of 230. Program staff members receive extensive pre-service and in-service training and serve both rural and urban geographic regions of Virginia.

The Virginia College Advising Corps connects near-peer advisors with underrepresented students to assist them with: college aspiration and searches, SAT and ACT prep, test and application fee waivers, campus visits, parent/family engagement, applications and essays, FAFSA completion, interpreting admission and financial aid correspondence, scholarship searches, and post-secondary transitions. They work to increase the number of low-income, first generation college and underrepresented high school students who enter and complete higher education by way of counseling and virtual information sessions; thus closing the gap on the number of college applications and FAFSA applications submitted. Joy concluded with opening the floor for comments and questions, one of which was: how many of the advisors are AmeriCorps members? Joy stated that all 42 advisors are AmeriCorps members who make a two-year commitment to serve.

At 10:45 a.m. the Board broke out into committee meetings and returned at 11:17 a.m.

## **Committee Reports**

### Program Committee

Committee Chair Sheila Williamson-Branch referenced the Virginia Service Commission AmeriCorps Formula Funding Program Recommendations for 2021-2022 that had been provided to the Board in preparation for the Executive Session. The program committee plans to meet in June to work on the work plan and will present more information at the next board meeting.

AmeriCorps Program Officer Analise Adams shared a survey completed by AmeriCorps Program Directors. Virginia Service Commission/VSC solicits feedback from program directors every year on how the VSC is functioning and on the technical support it provides to portfolio grantees. One of the findings was that the VSC excels in developing supportive relationships with programs and strengthening support networks among the subgrantees. Another finding was that as AmeriCorps continues to change and evolve, there is room for growth on how the VSC delivers technical assistance. The survey provided valuable insight to assist with the development of the State Service Plan as to how the VSC can best support existing subgrantees as well as develop relationships with new partners that can either be an AmeriCorps program or support AmeriCorps in some other way.

### Communications and Events Committee

Clifford Yee stepped in for Committee Chair Mark Fero who could not join the board meeting. The 2021 Governor's Volunteerism Award Committee received a record of 135 nominations. June 21 remains the deadline for scoring. Historically the awards have been presented at a ceremony at the Governor's Mansion. If the circumstances allow, the Committee will recommend that the awards ceremony will take place in the order of preference: outside, inside, or virtual. The 2020 awardees of the Governor's

Volunteerism Awards will be highlighted in a virtual awards presentation at the conclusion of the board meeting. Cliff encouraged the board to read their bio summaries in the program booklet. The awardees of the 2020 and the 2021 Virginia National Service Awards were honored at the 2021 Volunteerism and Service Conference. Clifford thanked the Committee for helping with the judging process. The 2021 Volunteerism and Service Conference was virtual and well attended with 382 participants, including attendees from 14 other states outside of the Commonwealth. Seven exhibitors, both nonprofit and for profit, were included. The Virginia Service Foundation secured a number of sponsors both repeating and new. The VSF also funded 14 scholarships among the attendees who had applied. All sessions were recorded and can be viewed for up to a year. Clifford highlighted the great efforts of Leanne Constantinidis and Gail Doyle of the Virginia Service Commission in their coordination and organization of the Volunteerism Conference.

#### Advocacy and Public Policy Committee

Kathy Spangler spoke on behalf of Committee Chair Priscilla Martinez. A work plan for the committee has been adopted, and one of the focuses will be on ways to educate congressional leadership—tentatively scheduled by America's Service Commissions (ASC) are virtual Hill Days scheduled for later in June, providing a good opportunity to educate and advocate. The committee discussed ways to help with their efforts of acquiring more bipartisan participation in co signing the Corps Act. The Committee will continue to request that Commissioners reach out to congressional delegation members to sign on as a cosponsor of the Corps Act. ASC can track how many from each state is received which will be reported to the Board in the future so that Virginia can continue to build its voice amongst the ASC community. The Committee is working to build awareness with the General Assembly and has reached out to Delegate Delores McQuinn about NCCC efforts, but the committee will over the next few months be pulling together another informational packet to distribute to both General Assembly members and congressional delegations. In addition, if the 2021 Governor's Volunteerism Awards ceremony is held at the Governor's Mansion, that could present a unique opportunity to invite the Virginia General Assembly. Also discussed was the state service plan and ways to move that forward. Kathy stated that the Advocacy and Public Policy Committee is organizing, but it will take the entire board to be engaged and add voice to the Virginia Service Commission's work and also to educate congressional and state delegations on the importance of national service and the state service plan study in particular.

#### Action: Executive Session

At 11: 46 a.m., Julie Strandlie requested that the Board move into Executive Session for consideration of 2021/22 AmeriCorps funding recommendations.

In accordance with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, Julie read the following statement:

*"We have received notification from AmeriCorps that Formula Funding applications from State Commissions will be due for submission on or before June 7, 2021. We have notification from AmeriCorps that Formula Funding applications from State Commissions will be due for submission on or before June 7, 2021. The Virginia Service Commission staff is able to present a proposed Funding Plan for 2021/22 that reflects the actions and ranking developed by the review panel which included members of this board. Per Article 5- Section 3 of our bylaws, the Board will consider and act upon grant applications for funds provided by AmeriCorps through the Office on Volunteerism and Community Service as required. We must review and take action on these recommendations. The funding information to be presented today is not yet ready to be shared publicly. Doing so would jeopardize Virginia's relationship with its funder, AmeriCorps, and with potential sub-grantees. Public discussion of terms and conditions may adversely affect our position in negotiating contracts. I will soon ask for a motion and subsequent action, reflecting the requirements and intent of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, to close this meeting*

*while we consider the 2021-22 Funding Plan. Once we close the meeting, only issues pertinent to funding recommendations may be discussed. Following the closed portion of the meeting, we will reconvene in open session. At that time, I will ask if any member of this body believes that there was a departure from the discussion requirements. If anyone believes that there was a departure from the requirements, he or she must state so, and indicate the substance of that departure.*

*Next, we will record a roll call vote in which each of us certifies that to the best of our knowledge that only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements AND only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the closed meeting was convened were heard, discussed or considered in the meeting by the public body. This vote will be included in the minutes of the open meeting. Before I call for the motion, what questions do you have about the process?"*

Julie Strandlie asked if there were any questions and then called for motion. Julie made the motion: *"I move that the Governor's Advisory Board on Service and Volunteerism convene in closed session to discuss the results of the procurement processes for investing public funds in AmeriCorps programming opportunities pursuant to the investment of public funds exemption at Section 2.2-3711(A)(6) of the Code of Virginia, and the possible award of public contracts involving the expenditure of public funds and discussion of the terms or scope of such contracts, pursuant to the award of contracts using public funds exemption at Section 2.2-3711(A)(29)."* The motion was moved by Clifford Yee, seconded by Bryan Pearce-Gonzalez, and all were in favor. *"The vote is in the affirmative to enter executive session."* All guests and ex-officio members of the board were asked to leave the meeting and return at 12:15 pm. *"We are now in executive session and I would like to turn the meeting over to Kathy Spangler and Roxanne Saunders."*

At the conclusion of the Executive Session discussion, Julie Strandlie accepted the motion to approve the recommended Formula awards and placeholder funding, the motion was moved by Vanessa Diamond, seconded by James Underwood, and all were in favor. Julie accepted a motion to conclude the closed session and convene in open session. The motion was moved by Clifford Yee, Bryan Pearce-Gonzalez seconded, and all were in favor to close the executive session. *"The vote is in the affirmative to close the executive session."*

Julie stated: *"Consistent with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, we will conduct a roll call affirmation in which each of us is asked to certify the appropriateness of the content of the closed session. Prior to that, however, I must ask whether any member of this body believes that there was a departure from the requirements of the FOIA. If so, please share that information now, and identify the substance of that departure."*

*Thank you. We will proceed with a roll call.*

*The question here is for you to certify that to the best of your knowledge*

*(1) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements AND*

*(2) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the closed meeting was convened were heard, discussed or considered in the meeting by the public body.*

*When Jae-Young calls your name, please answer, 'I so certify.'"* The roll call proceeded and all board members present so certified.

Julie requested a motion to approve the funding recommendations brought forward by the Program Committee:

**The Governor's Advisory Board concurs with and supports the recommended Funding Plan for 2021/22 distribution of formula funds from AmeriCorps as presented in executive session. The Board recognizes that adjustments will be necessary based on final available funds. The Board will receive a report of the final distribution of funds when contracts are finalized.** The motion was moved by James Underwood, seconded by Ashley Hall, and all were in favor.

Julie Strandlie asked key partners to provide updates from their organizations, beginning with ex-officio Lora Grady of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS).

#### **AmeriCorps Regional Update**

Lora Grady reported that the goal for the ARP (American Rescue Plan) funding that's coming to the agency (approximately 1 billion dollars over the course of three years) is intended to raise the living allowance of AmeriCorps members to allow for more diverse participation and to increase the number of slots and positions. The implementation of this is happening in phases. Summer surge funding to increase the number of VISTA summer associates by approximately one-third. The VISTA associates would begin with a focus on immediate Covid-related needs including public health, food insecurity, and learning loss. Also in relation to the ARP is the application process to the Volunteer Generation Fund which is expected to be open in the next several weeks. Additionally, AmeriCorps is planning for the national health corps or officially, the Public Health AmeriCorps. The White House in a press release announced the partnership between AmeriCorps and the CDC, consisting of approximately 400 million dollars in funding and supporting the addition of 5,000 AmeriCorps positions of service with a focus on public health needs. The shorter term goal is to provide some surge capacity for communities to address immediate public health needs, and some longer term aims are to create for these members career pathways toward the public health field. As a NOFO is not anticipated to be released before the fall, ways to implement that are currently being explored including possible implementation among several potential models used in current programming from other states and regions.

Additionally as part of the American Rescue Plan, AmeriCorps is looking into expanding power capacity in anticipation of much more work to do as the funding rolls out. In immediate response to this, some things put into place are staffing expansions which for the Mid-Atlantic region has translated into five new portfolio managers with the aim to better serve grantees. A summer program associate has also recently joined to assist with getting the VISTA summer associates approved, placed, and activated. The agency has also been working on the draft for a five-year strategic plan and have engaged stakeholders and grantees. Commissions and grantees were invited to provide feedback to the draft, and input is still being received through a survey. Some goals outlined in the draft are to: partner with communities to address systemic challenges related to poverty and equity, develop an active and civically-engaged society, unite the country through service, and effectively steward federal resources. Lastly, Lora reported that nominations to the AmeriCorps board are currently in the review process.

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

Vanessa Diamond reported that, as mentioned by Lora Grady, reappointments are underway to the AmeriCorps board. ASC is also working on how to advocate and collaborate with other coalition partners across the country with goals such as building fellowships and exploring ways to align to the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Climate Corps. Vanessa shared a link to a white paper from Service Year Alliance that displays a roadmap to what some state commissions are advocating to address issues such as COVID, climate change, workforce development, and racial justice.

[https://www.serviceyearalliance.org/reimagining\\_national\\_service?utm\\_source=ServiceYear.org+Connector+Newsletter&utm\\_campaign=3e6e313e2b-](https://www.serviceyearalliance.org/reimagining_national_service?utm_source=ServiceYear.org+Connector+Newsletter&utm_campaign=3e6e313e2b-)

She also shared a link to a policy proposal from ASC in regards to the CORPS Act.

[https://amsc.memberclicks.net/assets/S4S CORPS%20Act%20Overview%20and%20Summary%20April%202021%20with%20photos.pdf](https://amsc.memberclicks.net/assets/S4S_CORPS%20Act%20Overview%20and%20Summary%20April%202021%20with%20photos.pdf)

### **Closing and Adjournment**

Julie Strandlie adjourned the meeting at 12:23 p.m., and the 2020 Governor's Volunteerism Awards presentation began at 12:30 p.m.

Prepared by Jae-Young Choe

Submitted by Kathy Spangler