



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
Office of the Commissioner

S. Duke Storen
Commissioner

December 30, 2021

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Ralph S. Northam
Governor of Virginia

Members, Virginia General Assembly

FROM: S. Duke Storen *S. Duke Storen*

SUBJECT: Annual Report on the Governor's Advisory on Service and Volunteerism

The attached report is submitted pursuant to § 2.2-2491 (5) of the Code of Virginia, regarding the activities of the Governor's Advisory Board on Service and Volunteerism. Please contact me if you have questions. Thank you.

SDS:kc
Attachment

**Report to the
Virginia General Assembly
on the Work of the
Governor's Advisory Board on
Service and Volunteerism
for 2020/2021**

**Report to the Virginia General
Assembly on the Governor's
Advisory Board on Service and
Volunteerism**

2020/2021

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Annual Report on the Governor's Advisory Board on Service and Volunteerism 2020-21

Executive Summary

Article 25 (§ 2.2-2478 et seq.) of Chapter 24 of Title 2.2 of the Code of Virginia charges the Governor's Advisory Board on Service and Volunteerism (Board) with advising on matters related to promotion and development of national service in the Commonwealth and meeting the provisions of the federal National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993. The Board was established in compliance with the provisions of the National and Communities Trust Act of 1993, under which Virginia receives AmeriCorps State grant funds. This report documents the efforts and results achieved through the collaboration of the Board and Department of Social Services.

Powers and duties of the Board include:

- Advise the Governor, the Secretaries of Health and Human Resources, Education, and Natural Resources, the Assistant to the Governor for Commonwealth Preparedness, the State Board of Social Services, and other appropriate officials on national and community service programs in Virginia in order to (i) fulfill the responsibilities and duties prescribed by the federal Corporation for National and Community Service and (ii) develop, implement, and evaluate the Virginia State Service Plan, which outlines strategies for supporting and expanding national and community service throughout the Commonwealth.
- Promote the use of AmeriCorps programs to meet Virginia's most pressing human, educational, environmental, and public safety needs.
- Collaborate with DSS and other public and private entities to recognize and call attention to the significant community service contributions of Virginia citizens and organizations.
- Assist DSS to promote the involvement of faith-based organizations in community and national service efforts.
- Submit an annual report to the Governor and the General Assembly on the activity and work of the Board

Major activities and outcomes achieved during this report period include:

- In 2020/21, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) provided more than \$34.7 million in federal funding (including Segal AmeriCorps Education awards) to support Virginia communities through national service initiatives. These initiatives were carried out by national service members and volunteers participating in AmeriCorps, VISTA, the Foster Grandparent Program, the Retired Senior Volunteer Program, and Senior Companions.
- Due to COVID-19 restrictions, training opportunities were conducted for AmeriCorps members and program staff virtually by industry experts. Members attended a virtual opening day event in September 2020 and another in Spring 2021 for new members, with training on a variety of topics including safety in the time of COVID, communications skills, AmeriCorps member program benefits, trauma-informed care, and diversity/equity/inclusion. Members also attended Life after AmeriCorps training at the close of their service year on topics such as continuing their service commitment, job opportunities with state government and federal government, public speaking, time management, financial wellness, and making the most out of the Segal Education Award. Training opportunities were provided virtually for AmeriCorps program staff, including four days of AmeriCorps 101 training for new programs, as well as additional training on topics

such as the role of AmeriCorps in disasters, special events planning monitoring programs, managing stress, community partnerships, AmeriCorps branding, member management, and diversity/equity/inclusion.

- There was a strong presence of the National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) in Virginia. Teams of AmeriCorps members traveled to Virginia to serve by performing in 19 projects. NCCC teams contributed more than 32,000 total hours from 150 members. This translates to an economic benefit in Virginia of more than \$900,000.
- With the help of the Board, Governor Northam selected winners of the 2020 Governor's Volunteerism and Community Service Awards. Winners, selected from 133 nominations, provided significant contributions in far reaching areas of the Commonwealth. Winners were recognized during the May 2021 Board meeting with a special virtual award presentation.
- The Board engaged in the development of a three- year State Service Plan process, which will be completed by the end of 2021. The State Service Plan will prioritize ways to increase participation among Virginians in service and volunteer activities, as well as recommend strategies to improve the capacity and quality of the volunteer and service ecosystem statewide.
- The General Assembly requested the Virginia Service Commission to study ways to increase national service and volunteer participation. A working group of inter-agency representatives met twice during the period to review and recommend strategies that will be incorporated into the State Service Plan, which will be completed for report back to the General Assembly by December 31, 2021.

The accomplishments and activities of the Board helped the citizens of the Commonwealth improve the lives of their fellow Virginians through service. Working hand in hand with local partners, the Board tapped the ingenuity of Virginians to tackle some of the most pressing challenges facing the Commonwealth.

Annual Report on the Governor’s Advisory Board on Service and Volunteerism 2020-21

Powers, Duties and Report Mandate

Article 25 (§ 2.2-2478 et seq.) of Chapter 24 of Title 2.2 directs the Governor’s Advisory Board on Service and Volunteerism (Board) to carry out the following responsibilities:

- Advise the Governor, the Secretaries of Health and Human Resources, Education, and Natural Resources, the Assistant to the Governor for Commonwealth Preparedness, the State Board of Social Services, and other appropriate officials on national and community service programs in Virginia in order to (i) fulfill the responsibilities and duties prescribed by the federal Corporation for National and Community Service and (ii) develop, implement, and evaluate the Virginia State Service Plan, which outlines strategies for supporting and expanding national and community service throughout the Commonwealth.
- Promote the use of AmeriCorps programs to meet Virginia's most pressing human, educational, environmental, and public safety needs.
- Collaborate with DSS and other public and private entities to recognize and call attention to the significant community service contributions of Virginia citizens and organizations.
- Assist DSS to promote the involvement of faith-based organizations in community and national service efforts.
- Submit an annual report to the Governor and the General Assembly interim activity and work of the Board.

The Department of Social Services (DSS) and other executive branch agencies serve as staff to the Board.

Activities and Outcomes

The following details the activities and outcomes for each of the mandates of the Board.

Advise the Governor, the Secretaries of Health and Human Resources, Education, and Natural Resources, the Assistant to the Governor for Commonwealth Preparedness, the State Board of Social Services, and other appropriate officials on national and community service programs in Virginia.

Members of the Board play a significant role in assuring that DSS meets the responsibilities and duties of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). The Board met three times during the fiscal year and received regular reports on sub-grantee progress and new initiatives. Members of the Board participated on grant-review panels, which reviewed, scored, and recommended programs and funding levels for AmeriCorps competitive grant proposals and formula grant proposals. The Board received and concurred with funding recommendations totaling approximately \$4,565,124.

A State Service Plan encompassing a three-year cycle is required by the CNCS. The most recent State Service Plan concluded at the end of 2019. The Board approved an interim operational plan for FY 21 and initiated the development of a new State Service Plan that will be completed by the end of 2021, to cover the term 2022 – 2024.

Board members provided additional assistance in meeting CNCS requirements by participating in required AmeriCorps Days of Service in communities across the state. AmeriCorps programs recognize and support 9/11, MLK Day, and AmeriCorps Opening Day.

As AmeriCorps members started their formal year of service, a virtual statewide launch ceremony

was held with Board participation. The September 2020 launch ceremony was attended by 210 AmeriCorps members and featured a full day of training from industry experts. Another launch was hosted for members who began serving later in the year and was attended by nearly 70 new members. Three hundred and forty two full and part time AmeriCorps members served in Virginia last year.

Promote the use of AmeriCorps programs to meet Virginia's most pressing human, educational, environmental, and public safety needs.

The Board led efforts to increase the use of other CNCS national service programs including the National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) and FEMA Corps. NCCC projects are generally short term, high impact, and relatively low cost to the communities in which they occur. The Virginia Service Commission executed a memorandum of understanding with NCCC to support critical projects statewide and these projects resulted in additional 2020/21 AmeriCorps engagements in Virginia that otherwise would have not been completed. NCCC teams also included FEMA Corps teams, which contributed more than 31,000 total hours from 150 members. This translates to an economic benefit in Virginia of nearly \$900,000.

- One NCCC team helped support the mobile food truck program to meet food insecurity needs due to COVID-19 in Pulaski County. Members helped with daily data collection, creating multicultural recipe bags, assisted with the greenhouse program, and helped with other job skills programs like resume writing and computer skills classes.
- Another NCCC team served at the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, helping to install and repair fencing for the roughly 150 wild ponies that call the island home.
- Richmond also hosted a NCCC team, which helped with two Habitat of Metro Richmond building projects, providing affordable housing for the community.

Congress appropriated additional funds for FY21 to the CNCS for the American Rescue Plan. This additional funding will allow sub-grantees to increase the living allowance of AmeriCorps members, provide for match replacement, and support the expansion of programs across Virginia through 2024. A total amount of \$5,347,384 was awarded to the Virginia Service Commission.

AmeriCorps is a performance-based national program. Specific goals are required and measurement standards are strict. Programs work toward pre-identified client outcomes. The following are just two examples of program results.

- The impact of AmeriCorps in Virginia has both breadth and depth across the Commonwealth. The emphasis on measurable change and performance measurement leads to constantly evolving and high quality programs and services for Virginians. The COVID19 pandemic created pervasive challenges for students, particularly those without academic support available at home. Over the last year, 240 AmeriCorps members served over 3,667 students in and out of school settings. While these services were designed to be delivered in person, AmeriCorps members pivoted to ensure students still had access to academic support and opportunities to continue developing their social-emotional learning despite the barriers due to social distancing. These program adaptations included members tutoring students virtually, assisting schools in remote feeding programs, supporting academic resource centers that could serve students who needed a place to conduct virtual learning, among others. Some members tutored students over the phone when internet access became an issue.

- AmeriCorps members served 1,749 individuals in the last program year (9/2020-8/2021) through three different programs across the state. The International Rescue Committee, City of Richmond, and Edu-Futuro provide programs in Charlottesville, Richmond, and Northern Virginia for individuals facing barriers in securing employment. These services, designed to meet the unique needs of refugee communities, low-income communities in an urban setting, and Latinx communities, provided information, resources, and support. The results demonstrated a tangible increase in job readiness. Post-program assessments found that 74% of clients increased their level of job readiness as a result of the program.

Collaborate with DSS and other public and private entities to recognize and call attention to the significant community service contributions of Virginia citizens and organizations.

With the assistance of the Board, Governor Northam selected recipients of the Governor's Volunteerism and Community Service Awards. Winners, selected from 133 nominations, provided significant contributions in far reaching areas of the Commonwealth, from southwest Virginia to Hampton Roads. Winners were recognized during the May 2021 Board meeting with a special virtual award presentation.

Throughout the year, the Virginia Office on Volunteerism and Community Service hosted virtual training programs on a variety of topics including the annual AmeriCorps Opening Day event based on statewide survey needs from AmeriCorps program directors and members. Trainings were conducted by industry experts for members on safety in the time of COVID, communications skills, AmeriCorps member assistance program benefits, trauma-informed care, and diversity/equity/inclusion. Members also attended Life after AmeriCorps training at the close of their service year on topics such as continuing their service commitment, job opportunities with state government and federal government, public speaking, time management, financial wellness, and making the most out of the Segal Education Award. Training opportunities were provided virtually for AmeriCorps program staff including four days of AmeriCorps 101 training for new programs, as well as additional training on topics such as the role of AmeriCorps in disasters, special events planning, monitoring programs, managing stress, community partnerships, AmeriCorps branding, member management, and diversity/equity/inclusion and more.

Assist DSS to promote the involvement of faith- based organizations in community and national service efforts.

The Board promoted the involvement of faith-based organizations in community and national service efforts through the various national service days, annual conference, and special outreach participation in the State Service Plan stakeholder survey.

The website, VirginiaService.virginia.gov, continued to be an effective way to provide citizens and organizations with information on volunteerism, national service, and other community service resources. The website features a mobile-friendly format and is organized into easy-to-find categories: AmeriCorps, Volunteerism, and Community Services. The website also serves as a hub for information sharing among Virginia's AmeriCorps State programs and community section agencies. The website currently has nearly 12,000 individual users and nearly 40,000 page views annually.

Another effort to broaden awareness of community organizations across Virginia continued through the Volunteer Virginia monthly e-newsletter, sent to 4,000 community partners. The newsletter features the latest resources, news and stories of service from around the state. Also included are public and private funding opportunities, and training for faith-based, volunteer, and community organizations.

Conclusion

The accomplishments and activities of the Board helped citizens of the Commonwealth improve the lives of their fellow Virginians through service. The work of the Board goes well beyond the federally mandated role of overseeing the work of Virginia's AmeriCorps program. The Board promotes service among the citizens of the state and works closely with the Governor and local mayors and county supervisors to recognize those volunteer efforts. The Board and its support staff at the Virginia Service Commission/Office on Volunteerism and Community Service work closely with the volunteer centers and faith-based groups across Virginia, offering information and training to those organizations. Working hand in hand with local partners, the Board tapped the can-do spirit of Virginians to tackle some of the most pressing challenges facing the Commonwealth.

**Governor's Advisory Board on Service and
Volunteerism Members for 2020/21**

Lily Beres, Student, University of Virginia; Fairfax Co.; Falls Church

Jessica Bowser, Host, Virginia Outdoor Adventures; Fairfax Co.; Alexandria

Lisette Carbajal; Richmond

Elizabeth Childress Burneson, Attorney, Hirschler Fleischer; Richmond

Vanessa Diamond, Sr. Vice President, Civic Innovations, The Community Foundation for a Greater Richmond;
Richmond

Omari Faulkner, Strategic Development Director, ManTech International; Bluemont

Mark Fero, Grants Compliance Supervisor, Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services; Ruther Glen

Ashley Hall, Director, Chesterfield Communities in Schools; Richmond

Zachary Leonsis, Sr. Vice President, Monumental Sports and Entertainment; Washington, DC

Tyee Davenport Mallory, Deputy Campaign Manager, Office of Jennifer McClellan for Governor; Richmond

Priscilla Martinez; Senior Projects Director, Loudoun Literacy Council; Hamilton

Jenné Nurse, Equity Coordinator, Office of Equity & Community Engagement, DOE; Richmond

Bryan Pearce-Gonzalez, Professor of Hispanic Studies, Shenandoah University; Winchester

Jamie Seagraves, Principal Grant Manager for Community Affairs; Principal Engagement; Richmond

Seema Sethi, President and CEO of the Society for Enrichment of Asians; Fairfax

Julie Strandlie, Public Affairs Consultant, Strandlie Advocacy, LLC; Alexandria

James Underwood, Business Manager, IBEW Local Union 666; Midlothian

Leslie Van Horn, Director of Annual Giving, Norfolk Botanical Garden; Norfolk

Sheila Williamson-Branch, Treasurer, City of Danville; Danville

Clifford Yee, Executive Vice President and CFO, Northern Virginia Family Service; Fairfax Co.

Lora Grady, Ex-officio member; Senior Portfolio Manager; AmeriCorps Mid-Atlantic Region