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SERVE WISCONSIN

Wisconsin National & Community Service Board Meeting June 25, 2020, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

<i>Present:</i>	Christine Beatty (chair), Angela Ahlgrim (vice-chair), Theresa Clark, Laura Doolin, Anthony Hallman, Latoya Holiday, Paula Horning, James Langdon, Leah Lechleiter-Luke, Benjamin Lehner, Margaret (Jane) Moore, Ben Olsen, Yolanda Shelton-Morris, Patricia Takamine
<i>Not Present:</i>	Michael Hinman, Ibrahim Jalloh, Kate Jaeger, Amy McDowell, Donald Placidi, Susan Schwartz
<i>Staff Present:</i>	Jeanne Duffy, Ruhamah Bauman, Tracey Brent, Kyle Clower, Margie Kriel, Robin Lee, Alexis Matthews, Steven Yule
<i>Program Staff and Guests Present:</i>	Connie Bettin - PASS, Brian Blahnik – MCHS AmeriCorps, Jessica Brandt – Marian University, Tom Branen – America’s Service Commissions, Matthew Brantner – WisCorps, Elysse Chay – Public Allies, Karen Dischler - Schools of Hope, Cally Ehle – Easterseals Wisconsin, Bonnie Erickson - PASS, Amy Fink – ECLIPSE, Barb Evans – Portage County RSVP, Steve Frodl – NCCAP, Rochelle Hoffman - Blugold Beginnings, Kara Ignasiak – Farm to School, Shelly Kaiser - MCHS AmeriCorps, Erik Miller – Sixteenth Street Community Health Centers, VicMary Molina - Partners for Community Development, Jodi Thesing-Ritter – Blugold Beginnings, Todd Wellman – Public Allies Milwaukee, Kirstie Yu – Wisconsin HealthCorps

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:02 a.m. by Christine Beatty

Introductions

Christine Beatty had the WNCSB board members and Serve Wisconsin staff introduce themselves.

Public Comment – comment period will not exceed 20 minutes in total

No public comment

Approve Minutes from the May 14, 2020 Board Meeting

ACTION ITEM – Pat Takamine made a motion to approve the May 14, 2020 WNCSB meeting minutes. Second by Jane Moore. The motion was unanimously approved



Executive Committee: WNCSB By-Laws - review updates and approve

Christine Beatty gave a brief overview of the two changes to the by-laws in the By-laws Update Memo that were discussed at the May 14, 2020 WNCSB meeting, which would involve changing how quorum is calculated for voting and when elections need to be held.

ACTION ITEM – Tony Hallman made a motion to amend the bylaws as noted in the By-laws Update Memo. Second by Leah Luke. The motion was unanimously approved.

CORPS ACT—Legislative Update

Christine Beatty gave an introduction of Tom Branen from America's Service Commissions (ASC) to provide an update to the WNCSB about the CORPS Act proposal being discussed in Congress.

Tom Branen provided an overview of the Cultivating Opportunity and Response to the Pandemic through Service (CORPS) Act, which has been proposed by Chris Coons (D-DE) and Roger Wicker (R-MI) and currently has seven additional pairs of bipartisan co-sponsors. Tom gave a description of the major elements of this bill, including growing the number of AmeriCorps members to 250,000 over three years, increasing the living allowance to 175% of the federal poverty line, nearly doubling the Segal Education Award, eliminating income tax on the living allowance and the education award, and providing more flexibility to state commissions to do individual placements of AmeriCorps members.

He concluded by encouraging board members to find ways to get involved, including the commissioner sign-on letters and the campaigns to call or email legislators to show support for legislation.

Overview of Serve Wisconsin's new Program and Fiscal Monitoring Procedures

Tracey Brent and Robin Lee provided an overview of the new risk-based monitoring procedures that Serve Wisconsin has developed to conduct monitoring for Wisconsin AmeriCorps programs.

Tracey explained the reasons for the transition to a risk-based model, including that it allows more time to assist newer programs and those programs needing help. Each program will fall under high, moderate, or low risk category, and as part of this system, all new programs will be initially put into the high-risk category to receive the most checks and assistance. The risk category for each program will be determined through 22 programmatic questions, with different timings of interventions and checks based upon the risk level of the program. After the initial risk-level determination, Serve Wisconsin will review risk assessments twice a year, with the goal that by working with the programs during the year that the programs would be correcting different actions/practices and then the risk indicator would shift.

Robin then explained that Serve Wisconsin separated out the financial components of monitoring for a separate risk assessment, with programs able to be at different risk levels with their programmatic and fiscal aspects.

Jeanne Duffy described how this is a change from the past when Serve Wisconsin has been doing monitoring part way through the year, with the changes now hopefully staff, can catch issues earlier in the year before they can become a larger issue.



Program Updates—Summer Activities—WisCorps & Blugold Beginnings

Jeanne Duffy explained that in response to some questions at previous meetings about what AmeriCorps members are doing during the COVID-19 and with many of their traditional service sites have shut down with many, that two of the programs that have modified their traditional programmatic activities in response to COVID-19, WisCorps and Blugold Beginnings, will be doing brief presentations on what their programs and AmeriCorps members have been doing.

WisCorps

Matt Brantner, Executive Director of WisCorps, gave an overview of how WisCorps modified their operations over the last four months in response to COVID-19, including their deployment of a COVID-19 Disaster Relief team in La Crosse and how they are resuming most of their summer AmeriCorps conservation programming with some adjustments.

Blugold Beginnings

Rochelle Hoffman, a program director with Blugold Beginnings, gave an overview of how Blugold Beginnings transitioned their AmeriCorps programming to virtual service both during the school year and with their summer camps.

State Service Plan Update

Jeanne Duffy gave an update on the state service plan, explaining that Serve Wisconsin is currently in the middle of the three-year plan that started in 2019 and will be in effect from 2019-2021. She highlighted that two particular areas of strength, which were recruiting new AmeriCorps programs and providing training to the programs. She then discussed a few areas that were stretch goals where not much progress has been made, with many of these efforts stalling during the COVID-19 pandemic. These goals were working to increase the number of employers of national service in Wisconsin, working to have the education award matched by Wisconsin universities, and advocating for the education award to be income tax free at state level, with a couple of AmeriCorps alumni in state legislature working on the tax issue and asking Governor Evers to potentially include the change in the next biennial budget.

Volunteer Generation Funds & VISTA Update

Ruhamah Bauman provided an update on Serve Wisconsin's applications for Volunteer Generation Funding from CNCS, indicating that Serve Wisconsin should hear back hopefully by July 6 on whether the funding has been awarded.

Jeanne Duffy gave an update on the application process for VISTA intermediary funding. She explained that she had met with CNCS officials in February to discuss the VISTA application, but that this was paused during the initial response efforts to COVID-19. She described that in response to the racial disparities during COVID-19 and protests for racial justice, Serve Wisconsin created a survey to reach out to nonprofit organizations and that she would be having her first call with an interested organization later that afternoon. Serve Wisconsin will be continuing this process and applying for funds later this summer.

Governor's Service Awards

Jeanne Duffy described that this meeting date was originally set to coincide with the 2020 Governor's Service Awards. She indicated that Serve Wisconsin intends to have the awards ceremony virtually at some point this year and encouraged programs and others in the community to continue to submit nominations.



Update from Senior Corps Program Association

Barb Evans, president of Wisconsin Senior Corps Association, gave an overview of some of the impacts of COVID-19 on Senior Corps programs and the adaptations that Senior Corps programs have been doing to provide volunteer service over the last few months. She described the service that some of the Senior Corps volunteers that have been able to serve have been doing, including volunteering at blood donation drives, sorting and packing boxes of food, delivering food and other items, making items to be distributed in the community, and checking in on individuals that have been isolated at home during COVID-19.

She indicated that the Foster Grandparents and Senior Companions programs have probably been most impacted by COVID-19, as due to the lower income of the volunteers for these programs they have often been unable to serve virtually due to not having a computer or internet.

Update from Program Director Association

Kirstie Yu started off by thanking Serve Wisconsin staff for all of their assistance over the past few months, including the biweekly calls, collaborating with ASC on different surveys and providing feedback, and for continuing training opportunities for AmeriCorps members with the Dr. Gee presentation tomorrow.

Kirstie explained that the biggest concern the program directors have is the impact of COVID-19 on their programs, with them waiting for more information from CNCS on topics like the match waiver and how long CNCS will continue to offer flexibility in terms of remote service and their requirements. She indicated that some programs have had issues and concerns regarding host sites, including some difficulties in recruiting them, having host sites that have backed out of participating, and concerns about members being a lesser priority for sites with all of the other issues caused by COVID-19. She continued that there are particular concerns with all of the uncertainty that exists for school-based programs on what this fall will look like.

On the member side, Kirstie mentioned some programs having concerns about recruiting during all of the uncertainty with service activities and also wanting to make sure to still offer quality experiences and engaging programming for their AmeriCorps members while having less face-to-face interaction. Kirstie concluded that the program directors at this time had no specific asks of board, with them more wanting at this meeting to give the board an overview of their challenges for the next year.

Update from CNCS

Ben Olsen provided an update from CNCS, beginning his update by thanking all of the programs, program staff, and state commission staff for their hard work and flexibility during COVID-19. He then addressed the earlier questions around flexibility, expressing that CNCS wants to continue offering flexibility in regards to managing programs and that they are having numerous conversations at both the regional office and national level on how long this expanded flexibility will need to last.

Ben then gave an update on the CNCS transformation and sustainability plan, beginning with the rebranding research and discussions that CNCS has been undertaking. He explained that the rebranding is changing the brand architecture but not the structure of the programs themselves, with the entire CNCS agency also becoming AmeriCorps, as well as the shift from Senior Corps to AmeriCorps Seniors. He indicated that while this larger rebranding has been decided, CNCS has not gotten to the point of creating style guides, new logos, and other specific design elements.



He also described how the CNCS monitoring office has started first round of monitoring through risk-based model, where it will be working closely with the regional office and the monitoring process likely involving more programs but in a modified way under the new model.

Ben concluded by discussing VISTA expansion efforts in Wisconsin, indicating that they are hoping to start three new VISTA programs in Wisconsin soon and will share more on these efforts once they officially open.

Update from Commission Members

Latoya Holiday reminded everyone about the return to school guidance that DPI published on Monday and posted on their website, describing it as a robust and comprehensive document that is roughly 80 pages. She encouraged those that are working directly with schools, school districts, and families to please take a look at the guidance and to distribute it as widely as they see fit.

Tony Hallman requested to have committee reports on the agenda in October to allow for newer board members to have information on committees if they would like to join, as adding board members to committees requires a vote of the board. He also encouraged board members to continue to be engaged to help maintain the good programs we have and to make sure federal dollars are spent effectively, efficiently, and equitably.

Jim Landgon described how he was reporting to the Operations Center for the last few months to help with COVID-19 efforts and that his is now back at DOA. He described how Serve Wisconsin was far and away the most prepared program for remote work and the transitions everyone is facing due to COVID-19 with the investments into laptops and electronic file systems. He stated that in addition to the investments in technology Jeanne had made before the pandemic, that the leadership by Jeanne and the work of the staff keeping up during the transition has been exceptional and allowed everything to continue without missing a beat.

Leah Luke discussed the idea of promoting AmeriCorps as a gap year this year for graduating high school seniors with all of the uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 and the decisions families will make regarding sending students off to college in the coming months and over the next school year.

Christine Beatty gave an overview of how senior centers have been shifting to the virtual world, as the use of Zoom and Skype has made it much more possible to reach out to people, and that senior centers all across the country have been giving iPads and tablets to older adults and finding ways to eliminate social isolation and provide programming directly in their homes. She is hoping that over the next few years that homebound seniors will be better served by many programs because of the advent and spread of this technology.

Serve Wisconsin Staff Updates

Jeanne gave an update on the racial justice statement that Serve Wisconsin put out in response to the recent protests for racial justice and equity, explaining the goal of making it more impactful by including action steps. She described the first of the action steps being the training on racial equity that Serve Wisconsin is hosting on Friday, June 26 with Dr. Alex Gee, which has been opened up nationwide with over 900 people registered to attend. She continued that the second action item was sending out a survey regarding placing VISTA members in nonprofits that are working on the racial equity issues that were raised in the COWS report. She described how she had previously met with the VISTA leadership in Washington, DC to see if this would be an appropriate VISTA focus and also with Ben Olsen as our portfolio manager, but this effort initially being paused during the initial response to COVID-19 and then more fully restarted in response to the recent protests. She continued that Serve Wisconsin has already



received a few responses and that she has her first call with a responding nonprofit organization this afternoon. She then concluded by echoing Jim Langdon's praise for the efforts of the Serve Wisconsin staff for their continued focus and commitment during these past few months of working remotely due to COVID-19.

Alexis Matthews indicated that her major focus over the last few months had been with the RFP and the grant application process, and now that the grants are all now submitted, she will be focusing more on other things the next few months.

Ruhamah Bauman described how Serve Wisconsin is now officially an AmeriCorps Disaster Response Team, describing how she had worked with the Disaster Service Unit at CNCS to get the application approved. She continued that she is starting the process to build out the program, which would include the adding training to the member enrollment piece.

Ruhamah also indicated that she had submitted the Volunteer Generation Fund application to CNCS, and that Serve Wisconsin should formally hear back on July 6, as she has already submitted clarifications to CNCS for the application.

Kyle Clower began by describing that the 2018-2019 annual report is now available on the Serve Wisconsin website, which can be found under the Publications tab at the top of the page. Kyle then described the interview project he has been doing with AmeriCorps members serving during COVID-19 as a way to share their stories of service and how they have been a part of multiple relief efforts throughout the state. He described that he has been conducting Zoom interviews with AmeriCorps members from his home "studio" in his basement and then posting them on Facebook and Twitter. Kyle then concluded by providing a description of the early efforts that Serve Wisconsin has done in response to Leah Luke's point on promoting AmeriCorps service to high school students, describing the letters to the editor that he wrote and submitted under Jeanne's name promoting AmeriCorps as a solution for graduating seniors, which was published in Madison, Racine, and La Crosse.

Tracey Brent described that in addition to the transition to the risk-based monitoring system that she is also working on moving Serve Wisconsin to an online case management system and being able to access member files using SharePoint. She also discussed the use of DocuSign with the programs, with a question coming up about the board also using DocuSign for conflict of interest forms as well, with this idea now under consideration for future meetings when board members are participating virtually.

Steven Yule started out discussing how adaptability has always had to be the name of the game for Serve Wisconsin, referencing the effects that the Great Recession had on programs and agencies when looking at the performance measure issue that Kirstie Yu had previously discussed. He described how Serve Wisconsin will consider the impacts of COVID-19 on recruitment and other performance measures, indicating that CNCS will likely be doing so as well. He then described ongoing discussions he has been having with the programs in his portfolio regarding the impacts of COVID-19 and planning for the 2020-2021 program year. Steven then discussed his continued participation in some national work groups and some recent collaborations and discussions with other state commissions and ASC.

Robin Lee indicated that he has primarily been working with Margie and Jeanne on the backlog of desk reviews and financial monitoring components and that everyone has been very welcoming during his transition into the office and helping him gain an understanding of the programs.



Margie Kriel indicated that she has been working on some policy update information and completing some financial desk review on some programs from previous years that had been selected for monitoring. She also said that another major focus has been helping Robin come on board as the new fiscal officer.

2020 Meeting Dates

Christine Beatty listed the upcoming scheduled meeting dates for 2020, which are:

- Thursday, October 15: Board Meeting
- Tuesday, December 1: PE&D Committee, competitive round
- Thursday, December 10: Board Meeting

Christine encouraged board members, particularly those new to the WNCSB to attend the PE&D committee meeting and she thanked everyone for attendance today.

WNCSB Executive Committee Meeting

Christine Beatty indicated that the potentially scheduled Executive Committee meeting to follow this board meeting will not need to occur.

Adjourn

ACTION – Tony Hallman made a motion to adjourn the WNCSB meeting at 12:19pm. Second by Christine Beatty. The motion was unanimously approved.

