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**Kansas Volunteer Commission Meeting  
Hybrid In-Person & Virtual Meeting**

**August 1st, 2023**

**Members in Attendance:** Amy Pinger, Ginger Williams, David Battey, Linn Hogg, Ben Jones, Cindy Miles, Emily Riner, Carolyn Campbell, Selena Eckstrom, Melanie Haas, Barbara Hickert, Stephanie Kupper

**Members Not in Attendance**:

**Ex-Officio Members in Attendance:** Daniel Cruz, Mark Stump

**Ex-Officio Members Not in Attendance:**

**Staff in Attendance**: Jessica Dorsey, Amanda Noll, Elaine Rodriguez, Tierney Kirtdoll, Haley Matherly, Sarah Palubinski

**WELCOME AND COMMISSIONER PLEDGE**

Executive Director Jessica Dorsey called the meeting to order at 10:00AM. The Commissioners recited the Commissioner pledge.

**ROLL CALL OF COMMISSIONERS**

Elaine Rodriguez led the roll call.

**ICEBREAKER** – One thing you are happy about in 2023? And one thing you are looking forward to?

**VGF UPDATE**

AmeriCorps opened the VGF funding to all entities eligible across the state this led to:

* 183 applications
* 23 applications granted.
* Last week we received notification that the Kansas Volunteer Commission was selected.

Comment: Kudos to Jessica as Executive Director and to her team for pulling VGF together.

Past successes with VGF were surely as strong component in our performance here. We will utilize this funding similar to how we are using this funding now with some small changes. Typically, this funding has been awarded generically in the past, but now it will be more specific. We will be directing this to increasing the number of volunteers from underrepresented groups (ethnically, racially, age, military, veterans, LGBTQIA, youth). Funding will also increase the number of volunteers, mentors & tutors by creating a School-based Volunteerism Initiative. We will assist 50 schools per semester through training & coaching and a handbook we will create, fielding all questions through the district.

Q: 50 Buildings? Or districts?

A: Buildings. Better chance at longevity if you can get in at the school level.

This funding allows us to continue with Service Enterprise – yielding three additional cohorts and will fund the Social Justice capacity building mini-grant.

Timeline for VGF Capacity-Building grants:

August 2023 NOFO

September 2023 Grant Review

October 2023 Commission Vote

November 2023 KSDE Vote

December 2023 Grant Contracts & Training

January 2024 Grant Starts

Q: Timeline for funds to be expended?

A: 3 years to expend – by September 30th, 2026.

Q: Federal funding?

1. Yes.

Q: Social Justice Mini-Grants do not go to the board?

A: No, anything $5,000.00 and below does not go to the board for a vote.

Q: For the School Volunteerism initiative, will there be required match?

A: No charge for participation. This is not a grant. This will be training and technical assistance.

Q: Do all of our grants require matching funds?

A: Yes, match is at 50% currently. In the past our VGF grant amount was $117,000.00, then bumped to $130,000.00, this most recent application was for $200,000.00.

Congratulations from Commissioner that Kansas has done so well. Very proud of the team. Very competitive grant looking at the data provided.

Q: What is the average dollar award for the 23 awardees known?

A: We do not know that data. $200,000.00 to $300,000.00 is the mid-range.

Q: Can you break down the Commissions vs. Non-Commissions receiving this funding?

A: We do not know this data. Only know the total applicants from AmeriCorps portfolio manager. There is an embargo on this information until August 8th.

No clarification questions came from AmeriCorps.

**2023 CONFERENCE. THINK BIG. BE BOLD.**

Kansas Nonprofit Chamber and the Kansas Volunteer Commission are combining our respective conferences this year. Will be collaborating on the Inspire Awards (nonprofit & volunteerism awards). Commissioners will be reimbursed for all attendance fees.

Bag sponsors & exhibitors are needed. Need session ideas and suggestions for presenters. Also looking for recommendations for opening and closing keynote speakers.

Typically, AmeriCorps Fall Event is during this time in October. We sent a survey out to AmeriCorps programs, and they asked that there be one virtual event so the Fall event seems like the right choice. Spring Event will be in-person.

**AMERICORPS PLANNING GRANT**

We have set aside $200,000.00 in the AmeriCorps portfolio for additional planning grants around Structured Literacy – systematic word identification & decoding strategies. Structure literacy started out as a teaching tool for children with dyslexia but it will spread out to be the instructional tool for all children Kindergarten - 3rd grade. This is an initiative that is important to KSDE. Incorporating this into our work would help secure our place more firmly within KSDE as our work will support their work. Consensus agrees on this point.

Propose to have a structured literacy planning grant NOFO. Limit to $100,000.00 and only open to Institutions of Higher Education.

Current planning grants are Elizabeth B. Ballard Center and the Immunize Kansas Coalition.

Now is a good time to mention Harvesters has ended their partnership as an AmeriCorps program. Harvesters told us in time for the allocation for their funding to be removed.

**PLANNING GRANT TIMELINE**

Aug 2023 NOFO

Sept 2023 Grant Review

October 2023 Commission Email Vote (email vote as we don’t expect a lot of discussion on these rather than VGF)

November 2023 KSDE Vote

December 2023 Grant Start

Planning Grant will end at the end of July.

Need to remember that the AmeriCorps Operational and Planning Grant NOFOs release in late Sept/early Oct, so we would not want those running at the same time. Consensus is not to circle back to existing planning grants but to explore new higher education partnerships.

**COMMISSIONER SELF-EVALUATIONS**

There will be an Executive Director evaluation for feedback.

We are looking at Service Enterprise (SE) certification as our recertification is needed. We realized we ask all our SE cohort members to self-evaluate and to do stay interviews. We should model the things that we are teaching as well. How can we have Commissioners involved? Talents and or skills you want to be utilizing. Having good training and welcoming processes moving forward. We have three certified organizations connected to the Commission. It is thought Executive Director and Chair would conduct these interviews.

Commission can offer slide presentation on Service Enterprise to Commissioners.

**FURTHER DISCUSSION**

AmeriCorps may have education award eliminated. There are opportunities to advocate for this in Congress.

Harvesters was a program of AmeriCorps in Missouri and Kansas for 17 and 12 years respectively. Program director ran both states concurrently at one point. Harvesters cites administrative burden of running AmeriCorps program as reasoning for exiting currently. If the education award is eliminated this would make recruiting hard for all AmeriCorps programs and this is an area where there is already some struggling.

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

Commission Conference October 9-11, 2023

Partnering with Kansas Nonprofit Chamber on conference in October will reimburse Commissioners on travel, lodging, etc. for this event.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Next meeting will be on Sept 5, 2023.

Zoom.

Hickert made motion to adjourn. Wims-Campbell seconded.

Dorsey adjourned the meeting.