

Volunteer Tennessee
Quarterly Commission Meeting Minutes
Virtual Meeting via MS Teams
January 28, 2022

Members in Attendance: Chairing: Donovan Robertson* (proxy for Bove, Hill, Kriesky, Moten, Reeves, Silver), Suzanne Carr (TDHS), Sonda Finley*, Michael Hogan (TDSHS), Holly Jones*, Buddy Lea (TDF&A), Heidi Leming (TBR), Greg Lyles*, Jason Scott*, Leon Shields*, Caroline Ledlie (AmeriCorps), Tracy Van de Vate*, Amy Walter*, Betty White*, Eileen Wollam*

Members not in Attendance: Tobi Amosun (TDH), George Bove* (proxy), Stephanie Davis*, Brittany Debit-Barker* (TDOE), Bobby Graves (TDM), Marjahna Hart (TDCS), Andrea Hill* (proxy), Jessica Ivey (TDMHSAS), Rick Kriesky* (proxy), Lee Moten* (proxy), Kane Reeves* (proxy), Nancy Schelin (TDEC), Terry Silver* (proxy), VACANT (TDLWD, UTC)

Staff: Elizabeth Baum, Shannon Duke, Manny Ehiemua, Neelam Gupta, Jim Snell, Daniel Sparkman, Don Sowers, Candace Taylor

Quorum count: 16 (with proxies) of 18 appointed (9 is quorum). (*) indicates voting member

Chair, Donovan Robertson, called the virtual meeting to order at 10:02 a.m. He then asked for a quick round of introductions.

Donovan asked everyone to review the minutes from the October 15, 2021 meeting. Donovan called for a motion to approve the October 15, 2021 meeting minutes. Buddy Lea made a motion, and Eileen Wollam seconded. Donovan asked Executive Director, Jim Snell, to do a roll call vote. Jim called the roll, and the motion passed unanimously. Caroline Ledlie abstained.

Donovan gave a report out on Friends of Volunteer Tennessee, including a potential project coming to the Tennessee Serves portal, a social media campaign, and a podcast with interviews of volunteer leaders from across the State.

Donovan called on Jim Snell to give the Director's Report. Volunteer Tennessee staff are continuing to work remotely. Staff concluded the search for the new AmeriCorps Program Manager, and Manny Ehiemua started December 20. Jim asked the board to join him in welcoming Manny. Jim reminded board members who conducted legislative visits to send thank-you notes/emails to all legislators they visited. Jim then discussed the timeline for starting a statewide Corporate Social Responsibility network, and he will create a budget for the board to review at the May meeting, with the goal to host the first meeting before end of 2022. Jim then noted that the AmeriCorps agency has a new CEO, Michael Smith. Jim reminded the board of the situation in May, where AmeriCorps delayed making a grant award because it claimed Volunteer Tennessee had not completed closeout on another grant. He asked the board to consider its strategy dealing with similar issues going forward. Eileen asked if other states are having similar problems, which Jim confirmed they are. Betty White asked about options for the board, and Jim mentioned the calls and emails the board made in May. America's Service Commissions is also looking into the issue. Jim has also sent a written response to the AmeriCorps agency. He then concluded his director's report.

Donovan called on Michael Hogan to present on the funding decisions. Michael first reviewed the AmeriCorps Competitive American Rescue Plan Act results.

Michael then asked if everyone had reviewed and returned their signed conflict of interest forms prior to the meeting. Suzanne Carr, Jason Scott, and Tracy Van de Vate identified conflicts related to the AmeriCorps Formula funding and did not participate in the discussion or vote. Michael gave an overview of the Formula funding. Donovan called for a motion to approve the AmeriCorps Formula American Rescue Plan Act recommendation as presented. Amy Walter made a motion, and Betty White seconded. Donovan asked Jim to do a roll call vote. Jim called the roll, and the motion passed unanimously. Caroline Ledlie abstained.

Donovan called on Jim to discuss the 2023-25 State Service Plan process. Jim reviewed volunteering data for Tennessee and current service area gaps as they relate to the identified 2023-25 priorities. Breakout groups will work on the 2023-25 outcomes after the lunch break.

At 11:30 a.m., the board took a short lunch break. Donovan reconvened the meeting at 12:00 p.m.

Donovan called on Jim to frame the breakout session work on the 2023-25 State Service Plan. Breakout groups will discuss adding or deleting outcomes using the “2023-25 State Service Plan - Defining Impact” document. The board went into breakout sessions at 12:15 p.m.

Donovan reconvened the meeting at 1:15 p.m. and asked for breakout report-outs.

Breakout Group 1

Greg Lyles reported on the Breakout Group’s discussion. The group discussed generally whether the board should consider dedicating a percentage of future funding to certain programs, what the top interests are, and if it would be possible to find unrestricted funding (e.g., corporations). On “Food deserts/food insecurity”, the group developed these questions:

How can we partner with specific nonprofits that focus on Food insecurity?

- Identifying the nonprofits and the leadership
- Establish a day/month to focus on Food Insecurities

How do we fund our programs to move this forward? Are our programs focusing on these areas? How do we measure impact and success?

What area would we like to focus on within food insecurity? What info is submitted as a “wrap-up”? Are the programs highlighting and promoting their service?

Are their national programs? Funding from national programs? Outreach? Partnering availability?

Can we (Volunteer TN) fund programs that focus on this issue?

On “Education gaps”, the group developed these questions:

It is imperative that we are more specific. We are not utilizing our resources well or establishing relationships with our schools. How do we utilize these our resources to be more proactive?

Focus more regional/local counties/board of education/education commissioners/council members

More tangible outreach (not just website or marketing emails) by making contacts of educators, leaderships to led education series: workshops

Where do we find the data for education gaps? (school report card of the TN state site)

How are we measuring impact/success?

On “Economic opportunity and workforce development”, the group developed these questions:

Can we highlight intern companies/businesses that will offer internships/apprenticeships for job readiness?

Can we recommend/identify organizations to gain unrestricted funding that matches missions?

Corporate Social Responsibility advisory committee?

On “Diversity, Equity and Inclusion”, the group recommended:

Requiring our staff/board for DEI training.

Requiring our programs for DEI training.

Providing resources and recommendations that can provide training for the organization.

Breakout Group 2

Buddy Lea reported on the Breakout Group's discussion.

On "Food deserts/food insecurity", the group suggested prioritizing funding for programs working to address food insecurity (increase number of beneficiaries in food insecurity areas).

On "Education gaps", the group suggested incentivizing programs to address learning loss caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

On "Economic opportunity and workforce development", the group suggested that 10% of volunteer opportunities across all avenues result in employment.

On "Diversity, Equity and Inclusion", the group recommended:

Training related to DEI will be provided to 100% of Volunteer Tennessee's subgrantees.

Governor's Office on Faith Based and Community Initiatives- increased cooperation; survey questions related to faith-based discrimination/comfort level with faith in the program (select a percentage for an outcome).

Decrease barriers to organizations/individuals with English as a second language by offering resources like translation services or resources in multiple languages.

Leadership teams/boards of programs have a diversity that mirrors the population they serve.

On "Emergency preparedness and community resilience", the group suggested that programs become members of VOAD [Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster] and become aware of VOAD and process for engaging in disaster response.

Breakout Group 3

Sonda Finley reported on the Breakout Group's discussion.

On "Food deserts/food insecurity", the group suggested increasing partnership with local Farm to Table organization that are already established within each community to assist in training and "victory garden" concept. Data would be gathered from those organizations to determine a decrease in food insecurity. At present, we would base the numbers of food poundage and number of individuals or households served.

On "Education gaps", the group suggested continuing to support programs and utilize social media to recruit both partners and volunteers to assist in those programs that are under-utilized; and provide listing – both paper and via social media – of other educational resources.

On "Economic opportunity and workforce development", the group suggested looking at supporting a two-year pilot to leverage those programs already in place to assist communities with "prescriptions for food" set-up which would allow individuals or households to receive economic opportunities and assist with food insecurity issues.

On "Diversity, Equity and Inclusion", the group suggested providing training to new board members and volunteers. Utilize social media to recruit from within partners for those areas of expertise that are needed.

On "Emergency preparedness and community resilience", the group suggested providing outreach classes on disaster to both the board and volunteers on Emergency Preparedness; requiring applicants to provide a one-page document for in the event of a disaster within their area in order to create a critical continuity of serves; and including a metric of total number of individuals trained and the number of partners trained in Emergency Preparedness.

Breakout Group 4

Eileen Wollam reported on the Breakout Group's discussion. The group discussed generally having at least one program addressing each of the focus areas in the three Grand Divisions of the state; that the Grants Committee could give priority to applicants that are addressing the focus areas; and that Volunteer Tennessee needs to develop funding guidelines based on these priority areas. The group also noted that American Rescue Act funds are available over the next couple of years.

On "Food deserts/food insecurity", the group suggested collecting baseline data for food insecurity to be able to measure the impact of efforts and tracking data to see the improvement in the state.

Theashvillefoodproject.org 2020 community impact report could be used as a guide/model for demonstrating impact.

On “Education gaps”, the group suggested funding for a Reading Corps and building/continuing the collaboration with the Tennessee Department of Education and Tennessee Board of Regents to support efforts.

On “Economic opportunity and workforce development”, the group suggested “Life After AmeriCorps” for AmeriCorps members: additional resources, alumni resources website (e.g., jobs, job fair, college information, additional training opportunities).

On “Diversity, Equity and Inclusion”, the group suggested:

- Diversity to be included in the other focus areas.

- Be more intentional about this area.

- Given more weight to applications.

- Training (training materials) that is given to program managers. Recruitment of members is reviewed with a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Donovan then asked board members to share outcomes from legislative visits. Several board members shared positive experiences with both virtual and in-person visits. General Assembly members are supportive of Volunteer Tennessee and seemed to be more aware Volunteer Tennessee than in the past.

Jim asked that board members include any requests or follow-up needed from the legislator visits in the follow-up form, which was previously provided.

Donovan called on Candace Taylor to give an update on the Tennessee Conference on Volunteerism and Service-Learning. Conference will be February 13 and 14 and is shortened from three to two days. It will be a hybrid model this year. The Award of Excellence will be on Monday, February 14.

Donovan called on Shannon Duke to give an update on the Governor’s Volunteer Stars Awards. The event will be on Sunday, February 13 in person. General Assembly members and the Congressional delegation received invitations.

Donovan shared a reminder about completing board meeting evaluations via a Survey Monkey link that Jim will send.

The next board meeting will be on May 20, 2022.

Donovan called for a motion to adjourn. Eileen Wollam made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and it was seconded by Greg Lyles. Donovan adjourned the meeting at 1:59 p.m.

Approved: _____ Date: _____
Secretary

Minutes prepared by Manny Ehiemua, AmeriCorps Program Manager, Volunteer Tennessee.