

COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date: 11/14/2019

Meeting Location: Battelle Darby Creek Cedar Ridge, Cedar Ridge Lodge, 1775 Darby Creek Drive, Galloway, OH 43119

In Attendance: Donald Bean, Michael Bertolone, Gary Cates, Jane Federer, Mary Jeter, Charlotte Jones-Ward, Meghan Kaskoun, Amista Lipot, Matthew Rubin, Pandora Shaw-Dupras, Pamela Steurer, and Kristen Schweitzer. **Ex Officio:** Sarah Brady. **Staff:** Mary Cannon, Ava Carvour, William Hall, Carrie Niino-Koontz, Meredith Pugh, Jennifer Sanders, Lisa Tope, Rebecca Verhoff-Kiss, **Counsel:** Carol Mosholder.

Absent: Chris Shaffer, and Hannah Sublett. **Ex Officio:** Michele Reynolds.

New Business

- Meeting was called to order by Chair Federer at 10:12 a.m. (Attachment 1)
- Welcome and Introductions
- It was moved by Jones-Ward, seconded by Bertolone, to approve the minutes of the prior meeting, which was distributed in advance. Motion carried.

Executive Director's Report

- Bill Hall updated Commissioners on current topics as summarized in his written presentation (Attachment 2)
 - State Audit update
 - AmeriCorps 25th Anniversary
 - 2019 Ohio Conference on Service and Volunteerism
 - National Days of Service
 - Commissioner Engagement Opportunities

State Service Plan Strategy – Cole McMahon, McMahon Consulting Group (Attachment 3-5)

- Goals and principles
- Overview, Commissioner Engagement and Lessons from other States
- Visioning with Commissioners
- Organizing Commissioner Engagement
- Commissioner Engagement Allocation
- State Service Planning

Announcements/Other Business

- Commission Meeting Visitor Log and Comments (Attachment 6)

- Next Commission Meeting 1/7/2020 at 10:00 AM – Vern Riffe Center for Government the Arts, 77 South High Street, Columbus, OH 43215, 31st Floor, West B & C.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:58 PM on a motion by Kaskoun, seconded by Rubin, approved by acclamation.

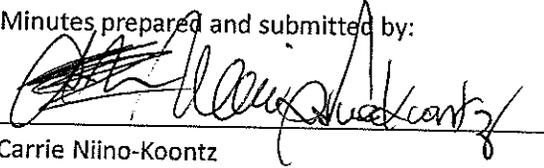
Executive Committee Meeting

Committee convened at 9:09 a.m. with Federer, Hall, Niino-Koontz, Steurer in attendance.

- Commissioner Composition and Reappointment/Appointment Status
- 2020 ServeOhio Budget
- State Service and Strategic Plan

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 9:55 a.m.

Minutes prepared and submitted by:

Cms 

Carrie Niino-Koontz
Director of Finance & Operations

Certified by:



Chair

Approval Date: 7 Jan 2020

COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Index to Attachments



SERVE OHIO
Ohio Commission on Service and Volunteerism

Attachment 1: Agenda

Attachment 2: Executive Director's Presentation

Attachment 3: Ohio State Service Plan Development

Attachment 4: Proposals emerging from ServeOhio's townhall sessions on October 23, 2019

Attachment 5: Commissioner Engagement Strategy - McMahon Consulting Group

Attachment 6: Commission Meeting Visitor Log and Comment Request

ServeOhio Commission Meeting – 11/14/19

Battelle Darby Creek Cedar Ridge, Cedar Ridge Lodge
 1775 Darby Creek Drive, Galloway, OH 43119

AGENDA

9AM	Executive Committee
10AM	CALL TO ORDER
	<p>New Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval of 9/12/19 Commission Meeting Minutes • Executive Director Report • Public Comment (5-minute limit)
	<p>State Service Plan Strategy Session</p> <p>Goals and principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss and prioritize Commissioner engagement. • Identify key priorities to the Commission (and the Governor) which are... • ...specifically achievable by community partners (as opposed to commissioners and staff, which we'll discuss later). • Narrow down the options, select strategic goals and convert them to objectives and action items. <p>Part 1: Overview, Commissioner Engagement and Lessons from other States</p> <p>Part 2: Visioning with Commissioners <u>Pick out Priorities.</u> These suggestions from the listening sessions and your reports are meant to serve as a start:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Promote volunteering statewide.</i> • <i>Create and support culture and systems for local volunteer solutions.</i> • <i>Build on local community volunteer efforts.</i> • <i>Help Gov. DeWine build volunteering into his policy goals.</i> • <i>Secure resources and position ServeOhio as a statewide force multiplier and problem solver.</i> • <i>Consider an issue area to model this effort (such as housing, addictions and mental health, or economic opportunity in all areas of Ohio)</i> • <i>Insert others</i> <p>Part 3: Organizing Commissioner Engagement Using the commissioner service description as a guide, we will create specific roles and assignments to deploy commissioner effort. These roles will be layered according to urgency and potential impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building connections and partnerships. • Promoting ServeOhio and your programs to policymakers.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting the staff to complete core functions and expand efficiency (where identified and called upon). Raising the Commission's profile in support of its budget. <p>Commissioner Engagement Allocation</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="397 304 1307 451"> <tr> <td>Connection 25%</td> <td>Influence 25%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Capacity 25%</td> <td>Money 25%</td> </tr> </table> <p>Part 4: State Service Planning Going back to the visioning exercise, build goals and objectives for the SSP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify synergies and quick wins for Commissioner engagement Apply standard of achievability and reasonableness to audacious goals Divide roles among Commissioners, partners and staff Work in groups on metrics and timelines 	Connection 25%	Influence 25%	Capacity 25%	Money 25%
Connection 25%	Influence 25%				
Capacity 25%	Money 25%				
3PM	ADJOURN				

2020 COMMISSION MEETING DATES

- Tuesday, 1/7/20
- Thursday, 3/12/20
- Thursday, 5/14/20
- Thursday, 9/10/20
- Retreat TBD

SERVE OHIO
Ohio Commission on Service and Volunteering



COMMISSION MEETING

THURSDAY
11/14/19

www.ServeOhio.org | [@ServeOhio](https://twitter.com/ServeOhio)

*ServeOhio strengthens communities through
AmeriCorps and volunteer engagement.*

1

SERVE OHIO
Ohio Commission on Service and Volunteering



CALL TO ORDER

- Welcome and Introductions
- Approval of 9/12/19 ServeOhio Commission Meeting Minutes
- Executive Director Report
- State Service Plan Strategy Session
- Public Comment (5-Minute Limit)

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State Audit

- **Audit Scope:** Testing procedures related to revenues, non-payroll disbursements, payroll disbursements, minutes and legal compliance.
- **Audit Period:** 7/1/17 – 6/30/19
- **Audit Findings:** No instances of noncompliance or internal control weaknesses.

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AmeriCorps 25th Anniversary

- Celebration event was held on 10/8/19 with over 800 AmeriCorps Members and program staff from across the state in attendance.
- **Special guests included:**
 - Hearcel Craig, State Senator
 - Steve Stivers, U.S. Representative
 - Barbara Stewart, CEO, Corporation for National and Community Service
 - Andrew Hanauer, One America Movement
 - Elizabeth Brown, Columbus City Councilmember & AmeriCorps Alum
 - Jon Husted, Lt. Governor
- Prior to the event, ServeOhio hosted Barbara Stewart and Bo Bryant, CNCS Director of Government Relations and External Affairs, in meetings with the Ohio LeaderCorps Members; Ann O'Donnell, Chief Advisor to Governor DeWine; and the Commission Executive Committee.

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AmeriCorps 25th Anniversary

“Thank you all for the planning and work that went into this day. And even through I complained a lot about getting up early on Tuesday, it was a privilege to meet with Barbara Stewart. The 25th Anniversary Celebration itself was mind-blowing. Being surrounded by so many others committed to service was uplifting. Being addressed--and thanked--by so many government officials was humbling. It was altogether over the top!”

Beth Thomas, AmeriCorps Member, Santa Maria Community Services

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Ohio Commission on Service and Volunteerism



2019 Ohio Conference on Service and Volunteerism

- Conference was held on 10/23/19 at the Nationwide Hotel and Conference Center with 289 registered participants – a five-year highpoint for the conference! Sector representation was evenly split between volunteer administration and national service.
- General Data Points
 - 99% reported that the conference was well organized
 - 97% reported satisfaction with the event
 - 89% reported they are likely to attend the conference again
 - 88% reported they are likely to recommend the conference to a friend/colleague
- Strengths
 - Networking
 - Conference Theme of Self-Care
 - Variety of Sessions
 - Quality Presenters
- Challenges
 - Matching session descriptions with content
 - Downtime between sessions
 - Pre-event networking for out-of-towners

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Ohio Commission on Service and Volunteerism



2019 Ohio Conference on Service and Volunteerism

"Speakers were great. I was also pleasantly surprised at how diverse the conference was in terms of demographics, regions in Ohio represented, and types of nonprofits that the attendees came from."

"I loved the topic of self care. It is very important for those of us that work with volunteers as it is very easy to get overwhelmed and frustrated sometimes."

"Format, venue, speakers---fantastic! I've been attending for many years. This was one of the best! Congratulations!"

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National Days of Service

- **Make A Difference Day – 10/26/19**
 - 12 Projects Funded (50 Applications Received)
 - Grants ranged from \$500 - \$2,000; totaling \$18,682
 - Over 1,400 Volunteers Engaged
 - Project Locations: Columbus, Marion, Toledo (2), Cheshire, Millfield, Kettering, Dayton (2), Parma, Lakemore and Canton.
- **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service – 1/20/20**
 - Accepting project grant applications now; deadline for submission is 12/3/19.
- AEP Foundation has committed funding for 2020.

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Ohio Commission on Service and Volunteerism



2020 Commission Meetings

Tuesday, 1/7/20
Thursday, 3/12/20
Thursday, 5/14/20
Thursday, 9/10/20
Retreat TBD

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Ohio Commission on Service and Volunteerism



Commissioner Engagement Opportunities

Promote/Distribute State Service Plan Survey
Deadline 11/22/19

Promote MLK Day Project Grants
Deadline 12/3/19

Promote/Distribute AmeriCorps Notification of Funding Availability for PY 2020-2021
NOFA release 1/13/20; deadline 4/8/20

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10

Process

Data

Ideas & Priorities

Implementation

Next Steps

INTRO

SERVE OHIO
Ohio Commission on Service and Volunteerism

**Ohio State Service
Plan Development**

NOVEMBER 14, 2019

1.

Introduction
McMahon Consulting Group

Goals for the day

Goals for the State
Service Plan

2.

Ground Rules

Honesty

Risk

Speed

Commitment

5.

State Service Plans

Blueprints and road maps for the state

(Technically not a strategic plan for the Commission)

Revised every three years

Required by CNCS

10. Director of a State Executive Office. The State Commission on Executive Administration shall be a State official responsible for the development of a national service plan for the State.

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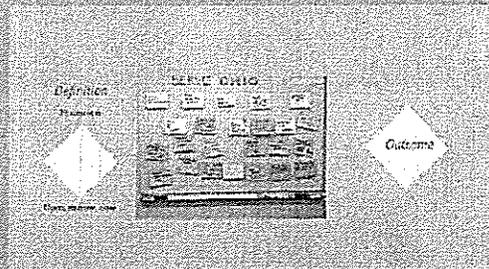
19. Director of a State Executive Office. The State Commission on Executive Administration shall be a State official responsible for the development of a national service plan for the State.

20. Director of a State Executive Office. The State Commission on Executive Administration shall be a State official responsible for the development of a national service plan for the State.

6.

Town Hall

October 23, 2019



1. What impact to volunteers have in your organization?
2. Where do you want your community to be?
3. How can volunteers get us there?
4. What do we do to make that happen?
5. How can ServeOhio support you?

10.

Commissioner engagement

Level 1: Common expectations.

What every commissioner does, the basic job description.

Level 2: Strategic, coordinated activities.

The extra mile: Committee work, partnership development, ambassadorship.

Level 3: Unique roles, Special Ops.

How you bring your unique skills and relationships to bear to advance the mission.

17.

Special Agent 001, Code name "Albright"

The Albright Effect



"I didn't get involved on my own, I had to be asked. Our Chair, Janice Van Meter, fired us up and gave us direction. She met with me one on one and asked me to do more. Everything I've done—ad hoc committees, the legislative work, setting up high school scholarships for service...it was all because I expressed an interest, and someone encouraged me."

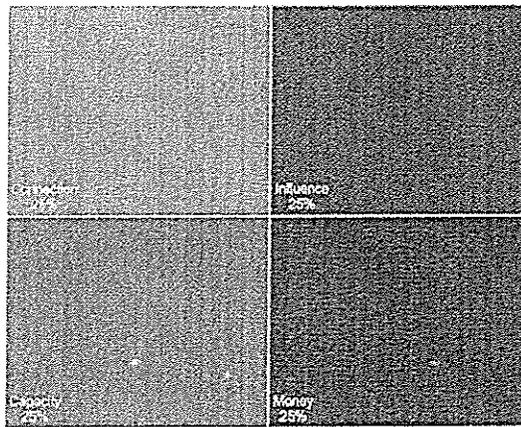
-John Albright, Missouri/ASC

Specificity

2016-17 Commissioner Roles and Expectations	
<p>Commissioner of Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... Represent the state and its people ... Articulate and communicate the state's educational goals and priorities ... Oversee the state's educational system ... Develop and implement the state's educational policy ... Promote and support the state's educational system 	<p>Commissioner of Higher Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... Promote and support the state's higher education system ... Develop and implement the state's higher education policy ... Promote and support the state's higher education system
<p>Commissioner of Economic Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... Promote and support the state's economic development system ... Develop and implement the state's economic development policy ... Promote and support the state's economic development system 	<p>Commissioner of Health Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... Promote and support the state's health services system ... Develop and implement the state's health services policy ... Promote and support the state's health services system

ICVS Commission Strategy Targets

Commissioner Engagement Allocation



How good plans work

1. Determine where you are
2. Identify what's important.
3. Define what you must achieve.
4. Determine accountability.
5. Review, review, review.



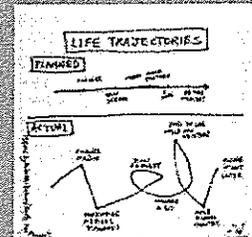
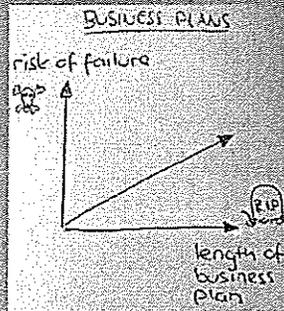
"Don't make plans, make decisions"

Lou Gerstner, former CEO, IBM

24.

Why good plans fail

- Unrealistic or nebulous goals
- Lack of accountability and follow-through
- Putting it on the shelf
- Putting it on the staff
- Unwillingness to change



28.

G'SOT

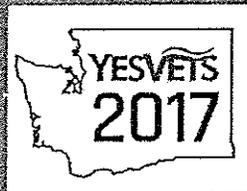
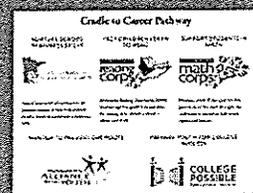
Goal	Primary outcome
Strategy	Carefully chosen approach
Objectives	Measurable steps
Tactics	Tools to pursue an objective

Ideas from other Commissions

Act bigger.

Get help.

Give credit.



State Service Missions & Plans

The Maine Commission for Community Service
 The Commission is a non-profit organization that provides a variety of community service opportunities for Mainers. It is a 501(c)(3) organization and is a member of the National Council on Public Service. The Commission is committed to providing a wide range of service opportunities for Mainers of all ages and abilities. The Commission is currently seeking volunteers for a variety of projects, including:

- Tutoring and mentoring
- Home care services
- Environmental projects
- Food bank work
- Animal care
- Event support
- Administrative work

 For more information, please visit our website at www.maineccs.org or call us at 207-533-1234.

SERVE COLORADO STATE SERVICE PLAN 2018-2020
 SERVE COLORADO is a non-profit organization that provides a variety of community service opportunities for Coloradans. The organization is committed to providing a wide range of service opportunities for Coloradans of all ages and abilities. The organization is currently seeking volunteers for a variety of projects, including:

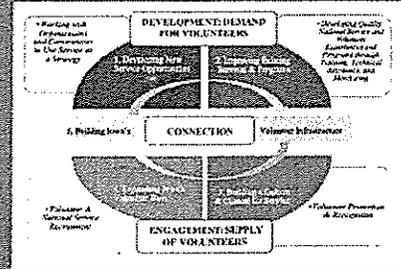
- Tutoring and mentoring
- Home care services
- Environmental projects
- Food bank work
- Animal care
- Event support
- Administrative work

 For more information, please visit our website at www.servecolorado.org or call us at 303-733-1234.

SUB COMMITTEES / WORKGROUPS
 The organization is currently seeking volunteers for a variety of projects, including:

- Environmental projects
- Food bank work
- Animal care
- Event support
- Administrative work

 For more information, please visit our website at www.servecolorado.org or call us at 303-733-1234.



Ideas from other states

Cicil 55
 management, affordable housing, and rural development, while learning technical skills and building a strong network of sustainability professionals.

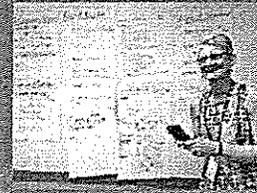
Climate Track | **Water Track** | **Opportunity Access Track**

All Cicil 55 Fellows will receive support to their governments through the following four key intervention models:

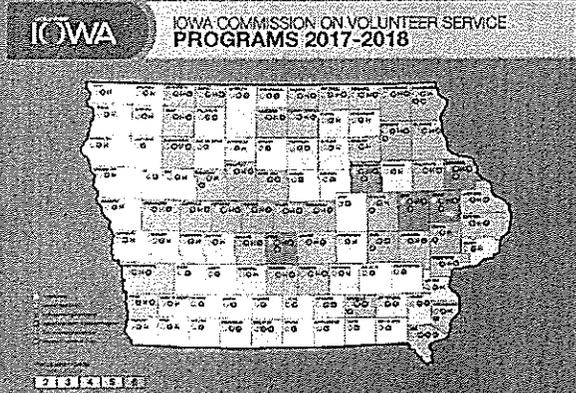
- **Gap Assessments:** Fellows introduce public agency staff and involve by documents, determine current needs, resources and methods to work and work with their superiors to fix their current issues.
- **Service Projects:** Fellows conduct a specific research, planning, or implementation project based on the government's needs.
- **Volunteer Engagement:** Fellows create a new volunteer program or enhance an existing program related to their community's needs.
- **Transitioning Expertise:** Fellows build progress beyond their service year by training staff and/or a helping results of their projects with the stakeholders.

Day to day, Cicil 55 Fellows will work with local leadership to identify and address the most pressing needs of the community. Cicil 55 Fellows get innovative rewards.

Cicil 55 Volunteer Leadership Program
 Overview and strategy

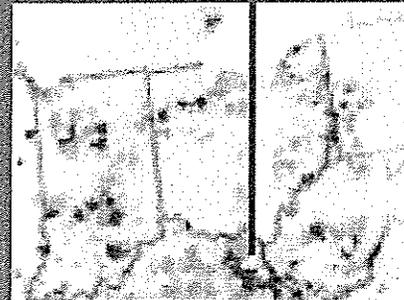


Mapping Programs



Population & Disaster

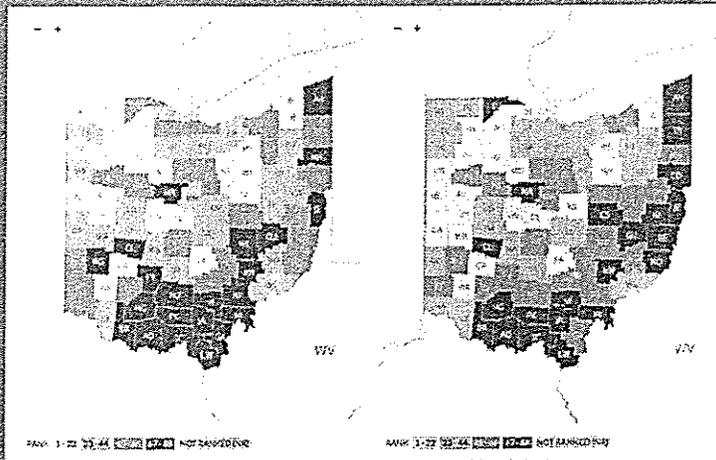
SBA reports of losses from
 tornados, wildfires, floods,
 hurricanes



Source: "The Places Disaster Strikes
 Again and Again," NYT, May 28, 2018

Community Health Outcomes, Factors

County rankings:
How long people live and how healthy they feel (less green is better)



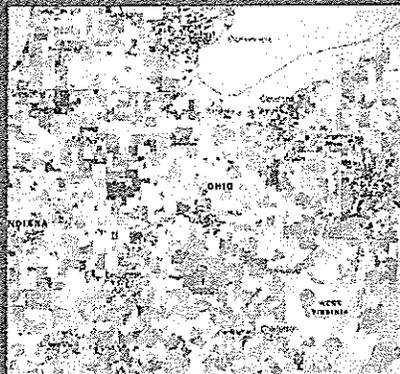
County rankings:
Access to care, social, economic and environmental factors (less blue is better)

Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and University of Wisconsin

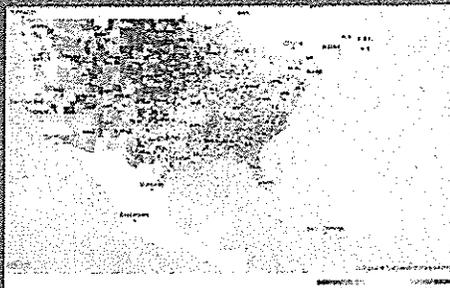
58.

Poverty & Economic Opportunity

Percent of people in poverty; highest shade is 10.26% or less; darkest is 21.26% or higher



Children's outcomes in adulthood based on neighborhood. Scale is from dark red (bad) to dark blue (good)



Source: PolicyMaps, "Detailed New National Maps Show How Neighborhoods Shape Children for Life" NYT, October 1, 2018

59.

State Service Planning

Topics

Youth services
Opioid use
Education, access
and poverty



Tactics

Outreach
Partnership
Capacity building
Joint funding

65.

Town Hall

October 23, 2019



1. What impact to volunteers have in your organization?
2. Where do you want your community to be?
3. How can volunteers get us there?
4. What do we do to make that happen?
5. How can ServeOhio support you?

66.

New Program Development

69.

Other Commission Priorities

Build a place-based 1-county solution

Member and Volunteer Recruitment

Equity and Inclusion

70.

Partnerships & Connections

Increase awareness of ServeOhio & programs

Strengthening
partnerships
with regional &
local conveners

Communications & outreach

For programming

For service/volunteer infrastructure

71.

Process

Information Gathering

(Research, surveys, focus groups and listening sessions)

Commissioner planning session

(Setting priorities and crafting tasks, measurable
outcomes, timelines and benchmarks)

Messaging

(Better explanations of what makes ServeOhio effective,
efficient and unique)

73.

Timeline

Info gathering, October-November Survey deadline, Nov. 22

Nov. 14 Planning meeting, Commission meeting

Draft State Service Plan completed for ServeOhio,
Dec. 2019

Jan. 7 Commission meeting, development of metrics, action
items, timelines & benchmarks

ServeOhio Strategic Plan, February 2020

74.

Writing Objectives

What do we
want to
accomplish?

Creating Action Plans

What do we need to do?

Staff, Commissioner or partner?

Quantify outcomes
(some is not a number)

Set timelines
(some is not a time)

75.

Proposals emerging from ServeOHIO's townhall sessions
Ohio Conference on Service and Volunteerism
October 23, 2019

Participants in the three meetings offered feedback and suggestions that blend three levels of effort. These insights and proposals will guide the State Service Plan:

- What can **all Ohioans** and every organization do to increase connection, engagement and volunteering?
- What can Ohioans do in their **communities** to build local capacity and solve local problems?
- What can **Ohio's national service programs** do to have a greater impact and create a better member experience?

Statewide efforts. Participants agreed that ServeOhio has an important role as a convener, thought-leader and promoter of service.

- 1) Develop a Call to Service. Create messages and tools for all Ohioans to serve. "Ohioans helping Ohio."
 - a. Launch a call to service for all Ohioans: "What's your passion?"
People will give or serve to what matters most to them, personally.
 - i. Ohio can do more to recognize and promote the many ways people engage in their communities, not just the formal ones.
 - b. Develop Platforms to engage different generations, personalities, perspectives, volunteer types.
 - i. "Guilt-free Wednesday volunteer blasts": an articulation of one way to promote service opportunities locally.
 - c. Foster state and local collaboration. Through convening, communication and connection, increase the level of synergistic problem solving and alignment of resources.
 - i. Identify statewide conveners and convenings—piggy back on existing partnerships to promote and support service and volunteerism
 - ii. Conduct a statewide "asset mapping" process, an inventory of efforts and organizations engaging volunteers to solve problems.
 1. Replicate bright spots, identify gaps. See below.

- iii. Promote or produce venues for collaboration
- iv. Promote local solutions to issues that touch all Ohioans.

Examples offered:

1. In home supports for elderly, families, people affected by addiction, etc. Also stated as, Connecting in-school interventions with family supports.
2. Collective Action efforts, such as hospitals working to fighting infant mortality in high need zip codes
3. Promoting trauma-informed care and training volunteers in this area

Community-based efforts. There was a strong consensus that the State Service Plan include steps and resources to *strengthen local efforts to drive local solutions*. A few versions of this were proposed.

“We need more and better volunteer engagement to drive local solutions.”

- 1) Create local “innovation labs” with all-hands-on-deck to create culture of change
 - a. Identify community convener
 - b. Engage local leaders, get buy-in
 - c. Build a network of community groups to participate
 - d. Invite community members to a series of problem solving sessions, training sessions
 - e. Create communication hub
 - f. Map community assets
 - g. Deploy community volunteers
- 2) Replicate current models of strong volunteer engagement and collaboration. Downtown and neighborhood revitalization in particular:
 - a. E. Youngstown’s United Way led efforts
 - b. Dublin’s community engagement efforts
 - c. The Taft Promise Neighborhood
 - d. Rural Action (across SE Ohio) and COMCorps model (Athens County)
 - e. Involve local merchants to lead community engagement, gathering, beatification, etc.
 - f. Link with campus wide student service efforts
- 3) Build community conversations.

- a. Conduct deep listening sessions, led locally, to identify assets and needs.
- b. Use community organizing and community problem solving techniques, emphasizing local historical context and shared success

Program-based efforts. Combined, the feedback from the listening sessions constitutes a focus group of AmeriCorps program staff and members, and a discussion of the predictors of member *impact* and *morale*. Programs are interested in increased collaboration and building a “sense of place” for members. members benefit from:

- *Community integration.* Members and staff seek more intentional focus on community engagement. Research suggests that more time out of the office or away from the service site increases sense of community and quality of experience.
 - Potential area for research: what members stay in their communities post-service, and to what extent do they stay involved?
- *Connection across programs.* Members tell us that their buy-in increases when they get to serve with others. Segmentation lessens impact.
- *Role clarity and creativity.* Members seek two things which appear to be in contradiction:
 - Clear roles with consistent supervision and
 - The freedom to work together and solve problems.The example of COMCorps in Athens shows the strength of member collaboration. The encouragement to work together increases member *agency*, the sense that their experience changes themselves and the world around them; members with tightly prescribed roles spent entirely in one school or classroom used terms suggesting limits and lower morale.
- *Tools and training.* Members and staff asked for toolkits to better serve in a community, with emphasis on asset-based community development (ABCD) and trauma informed care.
- *Professional development.* Staff and Members discussed increased connections and networking with local professionals, and regional job opportunities. There was also an interest in learning more about community leadership and post-service service opportunities.

Commissioner Engagement Strategy

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Executive Summary

Commissioners and America's Service Commissions share a common purpose. Using expertise and influence, both provide leadership and promote excellence. Across the nation, State service commission executive directors have forged a consensus: great commissioners drive the mission and agenda of building service as a strategy to meet local needs. As Maryland Commissioner Krista Gilmore reports, "We need to unleash the power of 1,000 volunteers."

And of course, this is a great opportunity to model your values. As the Corporation for National and Community Service has stepped back, ASC and commissions have emerged as the primary conveners and thought leaders for national service practitioners. But this audience remains a largely partisan crowd. State service commissions have the broadest and deepest bi-partisan membership of any of the service groups. Commissions are the best source and generator of conservative support for service, and commissioners are fundamental to this effort.

Rather than glossing over differences and ignoring political realities, this is an opportunity to highlight our commonalities across the political spectrum. A broad commissioner engagement strategy can be presented as a deliberate effort to bring together Republicans, Independents and Democrats to mend our fraying social fabric, and to serve together¹.

Over the course of the past year, we have spoken with staff and commissioners from 37 commissions to catalog how to best engage commissioners. They suggested these categories:

Recognition. Inspire commissioners and build upon the prestige that comes with the role.

Connection. Bring together commission leadership to create a cohort and build partnerships.

Resources. Share best practices and templates to increase commissioner role clarity and priority.

Training. Provide tools to orient and train new commissioners.

¹ David Brooks, NYT, June 11, 2018 writes, "As Jonathan Sacks writes in his 2007 book, "The Home We Build Together," there's only one historically proven way for people to build community across difference. It's when they build things together."

Activation. In special cases, call upon a select group of specialized commissioners to take on unique roles and tasks.

This report provides goals and strategies for each element to build commissioner engagement.

Introduction

There's a lot of talent, energy and great ideas waiting to be unleashed. For various reasons, too many commissioners are remaining on the sidelines, when their state, the field and their country need them most. The challenge is to speak to them in one voice, inspiring them to action.

Defining Engagement

"We have meetings and we have committees, but we haven't cracked the atom," one commissioner offered. This is a common assessment. "Our commission structure and commission meetings alone don't serve our mission," another posits. "How do we use time outside meetings to advance our mission? How do we create connections?"

There are many ways commissioners prove their worth. In a world in which some commissioners do not attend many required meetings, just showing up is a significant part of the role. We see three categories that reflect a higher level of engagement:

Level 1: Common expectations. This is the baseline work that all commissioners can do and should do on a routine basis. Examples include participating in meetings, promoting service and the work of the commission, thanking volunteers and marketing AmeriCorps funding opportunities.

Level 2: Coordinated activities. Some tasks are specific, but also require shared effort, and going the extra mile. These range from participation on commission committees, and calling legislators asking to support appropriations. This should also be an expectation of the role.

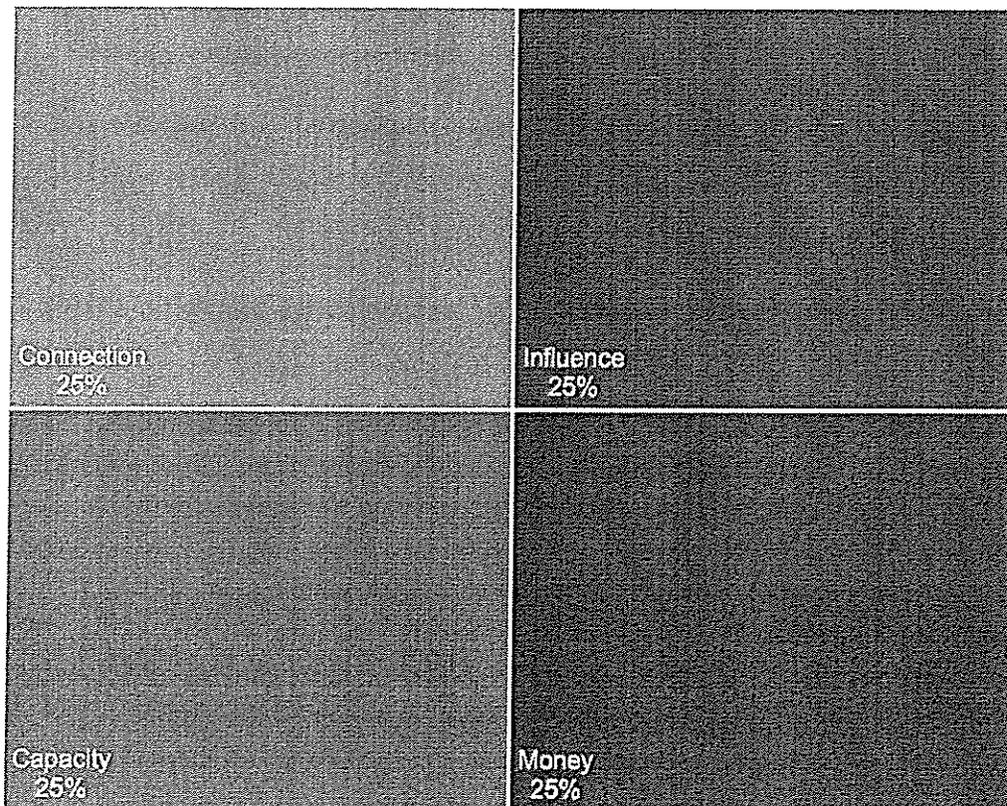
Level 3: Unique and targeted roles. On any board, great leaders provide thought leadership, and also roll up their sleeves. Commissioners are in a unique position to use their expertise, influence and contacts to benefit the commission. Building and using relationships with elected officials are the most obvious forms of this, but partnership building in all sectors is an essential role of the engaged commissioner. These special operations differentiate the average commissioner from the most active ones, or "Level 3 Commissioners."

This plan encompasses the goal to ratchet up the level of engagement for all commissioners, with a specific emphasis on training and activating more Level 3 commissioners. Level 3 commissioners are most likely to have impact beyond their home states, particularly after

completing their terms. (There are many examples across 20 years, but we'll call the cultivation, activation and deployment of Level 3 commissioners, "The Albright Effect," after John Albright of Missouri.)

Commission Strategy Targets

Commissioner Engagement Allocation



What commissioners want

John Albright has rightly been highlighted by ASC and Voices for National Service for his efforts to research and reach out to elected officials in Missouri and beyond. When I asked him how he came to be the poster child for commissioner engagement, he was clear that he didn't ever plan on it. "I didn't get involved on my own, I had to be asked. Our Chair, Janice Van Meter, fired us up and gave us direction. She met with me one on one and asked me to do more. Everything I've done—ad hoc committees, the legislative work, setting up high school scholarships for service...it was all because I expressed an interest, and someone encouraged me."

With permission and support, every commissioner can reach Level 3. Krista Gilmore, a commissioner and Senior Corps director told me, “My dream role as a commissioner would be to travel across the state and go to places where we don’t have national service programs, the nooks and crannies of the state. I would visit programs and businesses, find out about their employee engagement programs, and bring back that information and match it up with gaps in services.” What would you need to do that? “I do it already in Northeast Maryland and even Delaware. But my employer [the Cecil County Department of Community Services] doesn’t know what my role on the commission means to the County. To get more flexibility to do more? A letter from the Governor’s Office on Service and Volunteerism would mean a lot.”

As Bill Hulterstrom suggests, “Commissioners don’t want to ‘be engaged.’ Commissioners want clarity, cache’, to be well-utilized and to be valued.”

What executive directors seek

Executive directors shared these suggestions on the ways the most active commissioners have the most impact:

- **Building Commission Capacity**: Stacey Muse of Nevada states, “We need tools for plugging people in. They have the skills, and the buy-in. We need help getting them started.” The lack of staff time and capacity to support commissioners is the most common reason for underutilization—an ironic challenge in the volunteer management field. Research shows that a modest investment in capacity building pays lasting, transformational dividends.
- **Advocacy and Influence**: “In many states, commissioners do what we cannot. We need to free them up to do it,” Georgia’s Linda Thompson reports. And while some commission staffers can be more active than others, the need for commissioners to fight for service is universal. “Across the country, all Commissioners should play in the same orchestra,” suggests Connecticut’s Jacqueline Johnson. “To amplify our voice, we all need to speak about the value of AmeriCorps, we all need to understand the funding cycle, we all need to explain how our networks matter, we all need the same drumbeat.” Commissioners already have connections and access to policy makers and their friends.
- **Outreach and Problem Solving**: Commissioners want to create new community connections, and they are ideally suited to find creative solutions to local problems. “Some partnerships happen because of ONE commissioner,” Utah’s LaDawn Stoddard reports. After his keynote at the North Central Regional Training, Illinois Commissioner Eric Weinheimer related his speech to how commissioners are under-utilized.

“Commissioners should be focused on R&D. Ask us, ‘Help us diversify funding.’ Ask us, ‘Help us expand programming.’”

Commissioner Commendations

In my interviews with staff and Commissioners, I asked people to talk about a Commissioner they particularly admired. The answers are valuable as a lesson on what drives people to engage. We see some categories:

Stalwart Chairs

Katie Abbot, Alaska, highlighted her Chair, Eric Milliken, who manages community programs for the Rural Alaska Community Action Program. “As chair, he wears all of these hats. He’s always helpful, a really good thinker, a great listener, and he puts other programs ahead of his without a second thought.” Eric is also an AmeriCorps alum. “He gets service, and he’s always accessible—to me, to his team, to members, to everybody.”

Lisa Castaldo and Betty Ruth, the former director and the Vice Chair of Alabama, couldn’t stop raving about connectors like Sue Johnson who provides food at meetings or George Casey and Danny Patterson who make the program committee work, but they reserve highest praise for their Chair, Rod Steakely. “Mr. Steakely is a great spokesman for the value of AmeriCorps. Plus, he knows people in government, including all of Alabama’s Governors.”

Joe Bringardner, Kentucky, states, “My Chair, Kevin Mays, is a great thought partner, and always has time to support us and share his ideas. He’s a high-powered guy, but very straightforward and humble. When we want to do more, stretch the commission and grow our programs, he asks hard questions, but is willing to push the boundaries.”

Innovators and Workers

Iliana S. Malaret Yordán, Puerto Rico, said that Brian Betancourt leads the local AmeriCorps Alums chapter, and runs the grant review process for the Commission. “He’s on point, cares about member development, he’s involved, and he has great energy.” Not all of our Puerto Rico’s commissioners see the need to be more involved, she says. “Brian is a firecracker. He has great energy and ethics.”

Jacqui Johnson, Connecticut, identified Matt Farley, Director of Campus Compact for Southern New England. “For Matt, everything is an opportunity, not an obstacle. ‘What do we need to do to make this happen?’ He moves others from a ‘can I?’ to ‘how can I?’ mentality.”

Van Brooks, Maryland, says he loves Bill Mandicott, Vice President for Student and Community Involvement at Frostburg State University. Bill has had AmeriCorps grants in his portfolio since his arrival in 2001. He serves as Secretary for the Maryland Commission. "Bill is always dependable, committed, knows his stuff and is a quiet force for good. He's one of our most influential commissioners, because people know his opinion is rock solid."

Connectors and Resource Generators

Renee Bade, Idaho, suggested Kara Brascia, the Director of Service-Learning at Boise State University. "Kara is a great connector. Because of her, Boise State has become a favorite partner. They host our conference, give us speakers... but more than that, Kara's service learning students advance our work."

LaDawn Stoddard, Utah reports undying admiration for Todd Hansen, an Area Seventy (a high-ranking area authority official) in the LDS Church. As the chair of the commission's National Service Committee, Todd brought the Church's volunteer matching system, JustServe.org, to the commission to create synergies and eliminate duplication. "He's a prominent businessman, and he thinks in that capacity. He's very thorough and pushes the commission to think differently." As a personal project, Todd has taken on organizing AmeriCorps Alumni in the state on a higher education model.

Karen Baker, California, spoke glowingly of Jeff Hoffman, a past Chair and now chairs the Governance Committee for California Volunteers. "Jeff is my creative partner and balances me politically and otherwise. With 30 years of experience at Disney, he knows corporate America better than anyone, and is a world class strategist and role model. He lives out his convictions locally, in his work for California and globally."

Best Practices for Commissioner Engagement

Of the 30 executive directors we spoke with, only two said they achieved the high level of engagement they seek to move the state service plan forward. No matter where we go, commission staff say, "We need more staff, there's too much to do." There's no commission executive director or chair in the country with enough time to support (or manage) commissioners the way she or he would like. Washington's Amber Martin-Jahn said, "Give us tools. Case studies. Templates. We love to hear the great ideas from our peers." Here are some ideas worth sharing across the field.

Getting Great Commissioners: "Be picky with who you put on your commission," one E.D. said. "Look for skills and status." For commissions with the ability and influence to guide the nomination and selection of commissioners, this is an essential opportunity to keep leadership

vibrant. Serve Idaho utilizes the Gallup's Clifton Strengths Finder tool to identify gaps to be filled on the commission. Serve Nebraska engaged a politically connected consultant exclusively to identify, cultivate and recruit a slate with key relationships. Working with the Governor's appointments team, she was able to secure appointments for corporate and philanthropic leaders who elevate and promote their work.

Commissioners working with programs. A function that is consistently managed well across commissions is the preparation and approval of the slate of grants for funding. But it is rare for commissioners to interact with the programs. In Alabama, commissioners are invited to all program trainings and meetings. "I know all the staff, and all the staff know me," reports Betty Ruth, and her institutional knowledge and access to governors past and present is irreplaceable. Some commissions make interaction between programs a part of the calendar. In Kentucky, one commission meeting a year is a joint retreat at a state park, combined with a program training. In Louisiana (and, we presume, other states), programs make presentations to the commissioners prior to the votes on the competitive and formula slates.

Strategic alliances with the Governor. As the years pass, it seems that commission executive directors have less and less access to their governors. For every California, Florida and Mississippi, where legendary executive directors past and present have had consistent meetings with their governors, there are twice as many states where the executive director has no contact at all. A favorite example is the relationship between Director of AmeriCorps Chester Spellman and Governor Scott in Florida. As Executive Director of Volunteer Florida, Mr. Spellman met with Gov. Scott monthly to present a volunteer award to a community leader. It was clear from social media that this was a real highlight in Gov. Scott's routine. When I asked him how he managed to get a monthly meeting with the Governor (and one he was thrilled about!), Mr. Spellman demurred. "That wasn't my doing. My Chair at the time was very well connected, and she made that happen." But clearly Director Spellman was able to use that valuable time to invigorate the Governor's support for Volunteer Florida.

Partnerships. "Commissioners create connections," Utah's LaDawn Stoddard says. "We're #1 in the nation in volunteering, so we have to direct that impact." U Serve Utah works with, over and above AmeriCorps. Joining forces with other organizations creates great synergies. "Our former chair got the Utah Nonprofits Association involved with the annual Philanthropy Day luncheon. We merged events, and we do our awards in conjunction with the conference." A similar collaboration is underway with the Utah Giving Alliance. "They wanted Lieutenant Governor Cox to speak at their Summit. The Alliance is a perfect blend of influencers for business and foundations. It expands our vision, contacts, funders and impact."

