



**DRAFT**

**SerVermont Commission Meeting**  
*Virtual Meeting*  
**May 15, 2020**

**Members in Attendance:** Megan McKeever, Nicole Whalen, Christy Gallese, Kate LaRose, Dan Noyes, J. Guy Isabelle, Patrick Halliday, Susan Cheesman (ex officio)

**Staff in Attendance:** Philip Kolling, Robyn Baylor, Sharon Hearne

**Guests:** Tony Bednar

**12 Noon Welcome and Introductions**

Phil Kolling, brought the meeting to order at 12:04 PM. He asked those present to introduce themselves, to say who it is that they represent and to express how they are dealing with these interesting times. He also thanked all involved.

**12.15 PM Public Comment**

There was no public comment

**12:15 New Data: Updating the numbers**

Phil gave an overview of where the current programs are in terms of enrollment. He stated that the numbers reflected the extra slots and funding that Lyndon State College took on last year because of surplus available slots. He stated that he and the staff were quite happy at the work that people have done. All the programs are on or above target to meet recruitment targets including summer slots. The only program that we believe may have issues reaching full enrollment is VYDC due to low full-time member enrollment.

**Partners and Plans**

Phil stated that they are still recruiting Commission members. COVID has certainly affected the progress but three new folks are under consideration and Patrick Halliday from the Agency of Education has been designated. Phil welcomed him to the group.

Phil outlined some of the changes in AmeriCorps as a result of the pandemic. He emphasized that the changes are very much focused on the members so they can be safe and to minimize the impact on them. Many are tele-serving including the VISTAS. The changes included the following:

- Everyone must comply with state orders
- Continue the living allowance no matter the hours
- Develop alternative service activities
- Be able to Tele-Serve
- Allow for exits for personal circumstances
- Waive retention expectations
- Waive MSY utilization policies
- Approve reasonable budget amendments

Phil emphasized that there is more remote training and there are a number of folks serving in essential areas such as food security and housing.

Kate asked how many folks fell under the compelling circumstances. Sharon indicated one member has exited and one member has been suspended since the crisis began.

### **Program Updates**

Sharon shared that many members are Tele-Serving. Many members are helping with the COVID response, some are beginning in person operations and some are helping with the enhanced monitoring of COVID timesheets. She is also working with the programs to help them understand on how to comply with the new guidelines.

Robyn stated that there are currently 160 applicants for the current 39 positions and 30 full time slots. Two members have already committed to a second year and another is considering a leader position. Five positions are filled with several offers on the table. She indicated that given the economy and need that they may ask for more slots. She is very proud that they have been able to expand to southern Vermont. She had a visual of where the slots are in the state. Phil thanked Susan for her willingness to be open about additional slots for Vermont and for her work on our behalf.

Phil shared that the physical aspect of the May Conference for members had to be canceled but that they are doing virtual sessions with many of the presenters who have helped in the past. He also stated that the regional conference that had been scheduled for June 2020 has been rescheduled for June 2021 in Burlington.

He also shared that the program staff have been part of the Emergency Operations Center helping with volunteer placement and recruit and working with partners such as the United Ways and 911.

### **AmeriCorps Competition**

Phil shared the timeline for the process this year. He noted that it was different than the past. He shared the funding chart which showed that Vermont experienced a loss in Competitive dollars. While Vermont has done well in the past he explained that 80% of the competition dollars had been awarded to continuation grants. He explained that at least one program and maybe another would have been awarded competitive funds if the times and circumstances were different. As a result Vermont has lost \$600,000 that they have to deal with out of formula dollars resulting in a \$200,000 shortfall for Vermont. He stated that the scenario was not unusual around the United States. Phil shared that the feedback pieces for the programs not funded, VYDC and VYCC. Kate noted that some of the feedback given to VYDC appeared similar to what Commission members had given in the review process. Phil stated they receive all the feedback and can choose to amend their application based upon the comments, or if they feel they did address our concerns they can submit applications without taking action. Phil also stated that the Dream Program had received some National Direct funding that resulted in more dollars for Vermont but may have cost dollars in the competitive process.

Patrick asked Phil if there is any discussion about expanding programs given the COVID crisis. Phil shared many pieces that have been discussed but there is nothing of substance yet, but it is an argument for the sector to rise to the top in terms of importance.

Phil stated that at the end of the day there was \$715,000 available for formula funding with a current request of \$945,000 from VYDC, VYCC, LEAP and CEDO. Phil shared program information that showed performance in the past 3 to 5 years and he also shared what the challenges have been from a grant and program perspective. The Commissioners spent some time discussing the information that was provided. The discussion resulted in a motion by Kate ***to fund VYDC, VYCC and LEAP at an amount to be determined. The motion failed for a lack of a second.***

After further discussion it was determined that final formula funding decisions will be made after Phil has a meeting with Human Services Secretary Mike Smith on Tuesday May 19, 2020. Phil will schedule a special meeting so that the commission members can make a final recommendation for State Formula dollars to the program applicants.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:51 PM.