

Corporation for National and Community Service
Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting
February 8, 2005

The Board of Directors convened in Washington, D.C. at the Corporation for National and Community Service. The following members of the Corporation's Board were present:

Stephen Goldsmith, Chair
Cynthia Burleson
Mark Gearan
Dorothy Johnson
Carol Kinsley (by telephone)
Jacob Lew
Mimi Mager
William Schambra
Leona White Hat
Donna Williams

Juanita Doty and Alan Solomont participated at the invitation of the Board of Directors.

OFFICIAL ACTIONS

The Board approved the minutes of the meeting held on September 20, 2004.
(Transcript, 8)

Chairman's Opening Remarks

Chairman Stephen Goldsmith opened the meeting by congratulating Dottie Johnson, Henry Lozano, Donna Williams, Bill Schambra, and Mark Gearan on their re-appointment to the Board and welcoming new Board members Jacob Lew, Mimi Mager, and Leona White Hat. He thanked Alan Solomont and Juanita Doty, whose terms have expired, for their continued involvement in support of the Corporation's activities. All Board members took the oath of office.

Mr. Goldsmith praised the progress made by the Corporation to improve operations at the same time that Congress has increased appropriations and grassroots groups have rallied behind the agency. He complimented CEO David Eisner and Chief Human Capital Officer Joyce Edwards for the reduction in EO complaints and union grievances, reflecting the agency's appreciation for its professional employees. He noted that the Corporation had largely completed work implementing an executive order signed by the President one year ago to improve management. He stated that the Board was engaged in preliminary work to revise the Corporation's strategic plan. He stressed the Board's interest in improving the efficiency with which the Corporation uses the funds it receives from Congress. He praised the rulemaking process for its openness and constructive dialogue. Looking forward, Mr. Goldsmith focused on the need for strengthening service to State Commissions and state offices, improving technology tools, eliminating bureaucracy, and streamlining the grantmaking process. The Board intends to use metrics to measure and ensure progress in all these areas.

Chief Executive Officer's Report

David Eisner noted that the Corporation is making the transition from getting its house in order to beginning to have a more strategic focus on mission. Because 2006 begins three-year funding cycles for most AmeriCorps and Learn & Serve programs, the time is right for setting a new strategic agenda.

Mr. Eisner referred to the pending changes in Congressional appropriations committees, resulting in the need to increase the Corporation's efforts to communicate with and educate Congressional Members and staff. He stressed the importance of engaging all stakeholders in the ongoing discussions around the strategic plan. Of immediate concern is the need to advocate for the President's fiscal year 2006 budget for the Corporation, which proposes essentially level funding.

Mr. Eisner noted that the Corporation is making strong progress in all four areas identified in President Bush's executive order – leveraging community volunteers, meeting state and local needs, including faith-based and other community organizations, and increasing leverage and accountability. For 2005, AmeriCorps Grants will be extremely competitive with very few slots for new and re-competing programs. A search is underway for a new director of AmeriCorps VISTA. AmeriCorps NCCC garnered funds in the 2005 appropriations process for much-needed repairs to facilities. Senior Corps is hard at work contributing to the White House Conference on Aging, and also

pursuing legislation to lower the age and increase the maximum income for eligible participants in the Senior Companion and Foster Grandparent programs. Learn & Serve America is also moving forward in building a strong service-learning portfolio.

Mr. Eisner recognized the outstanding contributions made by Joyce Edwards, whose term as Chief Human Capital Officer ends in March. Her accomplishments include converting most appointments from term to general, increasing investment in training, tightening the criteria for annual raises and bonuses, instituting a management appraisal system, establishing a diversity advisory council, and hiring a new director of civil rights and inclusiveness. A search is underway for a permanent Chief Human Capital Officer and work remains in addressing pay equity, workforce planning, employee appraisals, and renegotiating the collective bargaining agreement.

SUMMARY OF BOARD DISCUSSIONS

Strategy, Management, and Governance Committee Report

Jacob Lew reported that the 2004 grant process for AmeriCorps is nearly complete, and on track to approve 75,000 AmeriCorps members. Initial planning for 2005 is complete, with just under 75,000 members projected. The 2005 appropriations will allow the Corporation essentially to maintain current program levels, although the number of VISTA members will decrease by 400 due to increased cost of living and health care costs.

Regarding management, the Corporation has completed the first phase of a business process review and is working to automate National Service Trust transactions, consolidate call centers, and undertake a workforce analysis of grants management, and is studying the feasibility of merging NCCC and VISTA payroll systems. Many of these projects share a two-fold goal: improve customer service while reducing operating costs. The National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) is currently examining the agency's organizational structure and financial management. The Board looks forward to working with NAPA to improve the effectiveness of the Corporation's operations and programs. The committee is pleased with the progress being made in measuring performance and managing information, but is aware of the need to address deficiencies in the area of grants oversight and monitoring. A search is underway to recruit a new agency-wide coordinator in this area. Finally, the committee is looking at ways in which the Corporation might better use appropriated funds to support the maximum level of program activity.

Program Committee

Donna Williams reported that the Corporation had, for the first time in 10 years, convened a training conference in Washington, D.C. for all CNCS state office directors and program specialists. The conference focused on preparing staff to support grantees with performance measurements.

Among program highlights, Learn & Serve is supporting 1.1 million students in service-learning, VISTA is incorporating performance measures into its application process and making progress in implementing e-Grants, Senior Corps has completed its national accomplishments report, the Office of Leadership Development and Training has significantly enhanced its online resources, and the office of Resource and Policy Development is disseminating state-level performance reports as well as an impressive report on the AmeriCorps member longitudinal study that shows an increase in civic engagement among former AmeriCorps members.

In response to questions from Dottie Johnson, RPD Director Robert Grimm reported that State Commissions are actively reviewing the state performance reports, and that the hope is that the reports will generate constructive peer to peer exchanges. Dr. Grimm also noted that the longitudinal study has received widespread media attention, including an exclusive article in USA Today.

Outreach/Field Communications Committee Report

Cynthia Burleson reported on behalf of committee chair Henry Lozano. The committee is focused on discussing the strategic plan with stakeholders, improving customer service, promoting the faith-based and community initiative, addressing identity issues, and building corporate and foundation partnerships. Ms. Burleson noted that the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service was a great success, with 500 service projects launched nationwide through the following intermediary organizations: Points of Light Foundation, National Religious Affairs Association of the National Association of Blacks and Criminal Justice, and the Hands-On Network. In addition, the Corporation is developing a joint initiative focused on prisoner re-entry and mentoring children of prisoners, along with the Departments of Justice, Labor, and Housing and Urban Development.

Regarding customer service, a re-design of the Corporation's website is currently underway. President Bush recently extended the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation. To date the Council has distributed more than 140,000 President's Volunteer Service Awards through nearly 6,000 certifying organizations. CEO Eisner recently gave a successful speech at the National Press Club reflecting on national service at 10 years.

Rulemaking Committee

Dottie Johnson recounted the extensive public outreach preceding publication of the proposed AmeriCorps rule in August 2004, followed by additional outreach during the formal public comment period. Staff has reviewed the public comments in consultation with the rulemaking committee and plans to submit to OMB for clearance shortly. The committee believes that, as a result of rulemaking, the program will be much stronger, better positioned, and more effective.

Alan Solomont praised all the stakeholders who participated in the process and reiterated the Board's hope that the rulemaking will provide definitive resolution to some of the differences that had been raised on an annual basis.

Mark Gearan expressed support for the Corporation's plan to monitor the results of the changes made in rulemaking.

Chairman Goldsmith observed that the Board will vote in public on the final rule after the OMB review process is complete.

Public Comment

Rob Waldron, CEO of Jump Start, extended an invitation to the Board of Directors to the Voices for AmeriCorps event being held that day. Kyle Caldwell, president and CEO of the Michigan Alliance and also chair of the American Association of State Service Commissions, explained that the event celebrates 10 years of opportunity and service. Mr. Waldron detailed Jump Start's program, which engages 2100 college students around the country to serve 3-5 year old low-income children. He explained that the public-private partnership design of AmeriCorps is working, as Jump Start has secured private support from Starbucks, American Eagle Outfitters, and Pearson. A three-year study concluded that the Jump Start program was delivering statistically significant gains among the children. Demand for the program is strong, as Jump Start turned away 1500 college students and 20 colleges last year. Mr. Caldwell emphasized the strength that the Corporation brings at the state level in leveraging resources to state-identified needs.

John Gomperts, CEO of Experience Corps, urged greater action in developing service opportunities that appeal to baby boomers who are approaching retirement age. Chairman Goldsmith noted that the Board has tasked an ad hoc committee to develop ideas in this area.

Marsha Meeks-Kelly, executive director of the Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service, urged that funding for State Commissions be maintained to ensure an adequate infrastructure for national and community service programs.

Nelda Brown, executive director of SEANet, the national network of school-based Learn & Service programs, expressed concern about the proposed reduction in Learn & Serve but emphasized that the field sees this as an opportunity to communicate that federal funds are an effective investment, leveraged substantially at the local level.

Chairman Goldsmith adjourned the meeting.