

Corporation for National and Community Service
Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting
February 15, 2017
10:00 a.m. ET

The Board of Directors for the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) convened in Washington, DC on February 15, 2017. The following members were present:

Shamina Singh, Chair

Dean Reuter, Vice Chair

Victoria Hughes

Mona Dixon (by telephone)

Eric Liu (by telephone)

Chair's Opening Remarks

Board Chair Shamina Singh called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone joining by phone and those gathered in person at the CNCS headquarters. She welcomed her fellow board members, Vice Chair Dean Reuter and Victoria Hughes, and indicated that Eric Liu and Mona Dixon were participating by telephone. She noted that Board member Rick Christman participated in the retreat the previous day, but was unavailable to join the board meeting.

Ms. Singh thanked all of the Board members for continuing to provide their time and expertise to the agency. She lauded the bipartisan structure of CNCS's board of directors and reminded those gathered that all of its members are nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate. The guidance and counsel that the board provides can be especially helpful during times of transition.

This is the first board meeting under the new administration. Ms. Singh recognized and thanked Acting CEO Kim Mansaray, Acting Chief of Staff Mikel Herrington, and all of the other managers who have taken on additional responsibilities during the transition. The Chair observed that this is a very experienced group of career officials who are keeping the operations of the

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agency running smoothly. Her appreciation extends to all of the CNCS staff here at headquarters, on the NCCC campuses, and in the state offices around the country. She thanked everyone for their continued focus, commitment, and professionalism. Ms. Singh noted that the work of the CNCS staff supports an extraordinary network of partners that make national service and social innovation happen on the ground in more than 50,000 locations across the nation. On behalf of the board, she also thanked the dedicated volunteers who carry on this vital work every day, including AmeriCorps, NCCC, and VISTA; Senior Corps, including Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions, and RSVP; the Social Innovation Fund, and all of the vital partners in the state service commissions. Day in and day out, they are making life better for the most vulnerable citizens, solving local problems, expanding economic opportunity, strengthening communities, bolstering our cherished nonprofit sector, and uniting Americans from different backgrounds to achieve common goals for America.

Ms. Singh stated that the work of CNCS is increasingly recognized at the highest levels of government, and on a bipartisan basis. There was an extraordinary demonstration of that the previous night at the 14th Annual Friends of National Service Awards event. The event recognized members of Congress on both sides of the aisle, governors, mayors, and private sector leaders for being champions of AmeriCorps and Senior Corps. It was extraordinary to hear speaker after speaker, including the chair of our Appropriations Subcommittee, provide testimonials about the importance and value of national service.

Ms. Singh invited members of the public who joined the meeting to comment on the business of the board. She then reviewed the meeting agenda. She would summarize the previous day's retreat, call on Acting CEO Kim Mansaray to provide her report to the board, and then have a very special recognition by the board. Then the meeting would open for public comments. The board had previously approved the minutes from its October 2016 meeting, so a vote on that was not necessary.

Report on the Board's Retreat

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Ms. Singh said that at the retreat, the board had a thorough report from the Acting CEO about the transition and agency and program accomplishments since the board's last meeting. Jeff Page, Chief Operating Officer; Bob McCarty, Chief Financial Officer; Dana Bourne, Chief Grants Officer; and Lori Giblin, Chief Risk Officer, gave updates on operations, the budget, grants monitoring, and the comprehensive approach to risk management the agency is implementing. Inspector General Deborah Jeffrey also provided an update. Ms. Singh thanked Ms. Jeffrey and her team for working so closely with the agency to strengthen operations and accountability. The board discussed government relations, stakeholder engagement, and external affairs with Tess Mason-Elder, Acting Director of Government Relations; Sandy Scott, Senior Advisor to the CEO and State Commission Liaison; and Marc Young, Acting Chief of External Affairs. Finally, the board heard from Kelly Daly, the employee union's representative. Ms. Singh emphasized how appreciative the board was that the staff continued to move forward with such pace and dedication, even during this time of transition.

Ms. Singh stated that accountability and oversight were a focus of the retreat, and that the board of directors considered it a priority to ensure that tax dollars are spent properly and effectively. Over the years, CNCS has built a culture of accountability and a strong system for monitoring and oversight, and those systems are working. The board appreciates how CNCS is always looking for ways to strengthen monitoring, risk management, and accountability while also recognizing that some CNCS grantees, who are doing such good work in communities, have capacity constraints.

The Chair also noted that, at the retreat, the board discussed CNCS's strong position and its eagerness to work with President Trump's administration and Congress to meet national and local needs to expand opportunities, bolster a civil society, and unite communities.

Ms. Singh then asked Acting CEO Kim Mansaray to present her report. Ms. Mansaray has served at CNCS for the past 17 years in a variety of positions and with increasing responsibility.

The Acting Chief Executive Officer's Report

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Ms. Mansaray reported to the board and public as follows:

- She strongly believes in the work done at CNCS and is impressed by the dedication and professionalism of the CNCS team. She believes the foundation we have created by maintaining high standards for accountability, oversight, and risk management lays a pathway to success. The foundation is exemplified by such things as the issuance last fall of our 17th consecutive clean audit and by our constant focus on improving our processes and rigorously managing our programs and grantees.
- National service is an idea that has champions on both sides of the aisle and has received support from the last four administrations. The agency has this kind of support because what it does matters to millions of Americans. The value of national service has been proven time and time again – improving lives in thousands of communities and locations and providing a significant return on the federal investment in our programs.
- The current leadership at CNCS looks forward to welcoming Trump Administration officials and working with them to empower citizens, expand opportunity, and improve lives.
- Highlights of some of the agency’s accomplishments since the last board meeting are:
 - In October, 2016, AmeriCorps inducted its one millionth member. To mark the occasion, NASA astronaut Dr. Kathleen Rubins swore in new members from the International Space Station. The millionth induction was a powerful milestone in AmeriCorps’s existence and the swearing-in led from the Space Station was a symbol of the heights the program has reached in 22 years.
 - In January 2017, CNCS released a new report that shed some light on why the AmeriCorps program has endured for more than two decades. A study of alumni from 2005, 2010, and 2013 found that AmeriCorps service was a positive, meaningful, and defining experience that had an effect on both their professional

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and personal lives. Almost 80 percent of alumni are involved in or plan to get involved in their communities after AmeriCorps. Seventy percent said AmeriCorps helped them achieve their educational goals, thanks to the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award. Further, 8 out of 10 said that AmeriCorps had benefitted and advanced their career paths.

- CNCS has received over 400 applications for the 2017 AmeriCorps State and National Grants competition. Throughout the spring, we will be announcing the winners of three AmeriCorps grant competitions, including the State Commission grants.
- The AmeriCorps Indian Tribes Grants competition will prioritize topics such as improving educational performance – especially STEM education – and healthy futures, especially reducing substance abuse and preventing suicide.
- The 2017 AmeriCorps State and National Grants Targeted Priority competition is seeking programs that (1) support healthy futures by addressing the prescription drug and opioid abuse crisis and (2) create safer communities by strengthening law enforcement and community relations. Currently, 22 state service commissions are contributing to a pilot initiative to determine how AmeriCorps members can address one or both of these issues within their state.
- AmeriCorps VISTA members continue to deliver results consistent with the program’s longstanding mission as our nation’s poverty-fighting force. As an example, and thanks to members serving in Montana, the Gateway VISTA affordable housing project, which is run by the YWCA in Billings, will receive \$3.8 million in low-income housing tax credit funding. The tax credits will cover most of the \$4.6 million cost to build 24 affordable apartments at the YWCA Billings campus. Gateway VISTA will also feature offices and counseling space for the wraparound services that help the people who are being sheltered move out of poverty.

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- The first encounter many Americans have with our many programs and services is – unfortunately – in the aftermath of a natural or manmade disaster. In 2016, CNCS responded to 8 federally-declared disasters, deploying more than 3,350 AmeriCorps disaster response team members, with the support of \$7.6 million in mission assignments from FEMA. Those disasters included East Tennessee wildfires; Hurricane Matthew; flooding in Louisiana, Missouri, West Virginia, and Texas; and the Flint, Michigan water crisis. This high-profile service has continued during four federally-declared disasters in 2017 in Mississippi, Georgia, Louisiana, and Tennessee.
- AmeriCorps NCCC plays a lead role in our disaster responses. More than 450 traditional AmeriCorps NCCC members and 490 FEMA Corps members were deployed in response to the flooding in Baton Rouge, Louisiana last fall. AmeriCorps NCCC sent 26 members to respond to the wildfires in East Tennessee in December and 27 members to respond to the storms in Georgia and Mississippi in January.
- Senior Corps, in partnership with the CNCS Disaster Services unit, has invested funds to organize five training events entitled “Elevating the Role of RSVP on Disaster Response.” The events will help RSVP grantees develop strategies to expand the role of Senior Corps volunteers in disaster response. Senior Corps also launched the RSVP 2017 Expansion Competition Notice of Funding Opportunity. The competition is designed to demonstrate RSVP’s growth potential and ability to respond to critical local needs. Funding priorities include evidence-based program implementation, elder justice, education and intergenerational programming, access to care, aging in place, and improving economic development.
- The Social Innovation Fund (SIF) is now supporting grantees and subgrantees at 1,330 locations in 43 states and the District of Columbia. The program is one of

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the earliest federal participants in pay-for-success grant-making. Since its inception, SIF has generated \$672 million in matching commitments for the federal investment of \$341 million in the program. A particular highlight this year is a \$1.5 million grant to Social Finance's partnership with the Veterans Administration, which will be used to develop a pay-for-success project to improve employment outcomes for veterans.

- A pilot veterans AmeriCorps apprenticeship program has been approved by the Department of Labor, the culmination of a two-year effort. The program will allow veterans to simultaneously serve in AmeriCorps and be enrolled in an apprenticeship program, affording them the benefits of both. Members will be able to continue to serve their country in a meaningful way while they earn an apprenticeship certificate and have access to the GI benefits they earned for prior military service.
- Research and evaluation has been critical in support of CNCS programs and initiatives. We have expanded the evaluation resources we give to grantees to strengthen their evidence-building efforts. National studies conducted on the nonprofit sector confirm the value of providing these resources to our partner organizations. An emerging body of research supports the role of national service and social innovation in advancing critical national goals, and it affirms the effectiveness of national service programs. This research shows the return on investment of our initiatives and how the service our members provide improves education outcomes, increases access to college, boosts employment and earnings, and improves health behaviors. We highlighted some of these findings during our second annual research summit in December.

Ms. Mansaray closed by noting that day in and day out, CNCS makes life better for our most vulnerable citizens. The programs and grantees solve local problems, expand opportunity,

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strengthen communities, and unite people from different backgrounds to achieve common goals for America. All in the agency are proud to serve the American people.

Remarks by the Board Chair

The board chair thanked Ms. Mansaray and introduced Wendy Spencer, the former CEO of CNCS. Ms. Singh recognized that for nearly five years, Ms. Spencer led CNCS, and the large international focus on social innovation, to great heights. Ms. Spencer left CNCS on January 20, 2017, with a strong record of success and momentum, the second-highest funding level in history, an experienced network of more than 2,000 grantees, successful growth of the Social Innovation Fund, a growing body of evidence about our impact, record amounts of leveraged non-CNCS resources, growing bipartisan support from elected officials, and greater public awareness of, and support for, national service.

Ms. Singh then read aloud a board resolution honoring Ms. Spencer and expressing the board's appreciation for her energy, vision, and leadership, which have done so much to strengthen not only CNCS and its programs, but to improve and strengthen communities and the nation.

Remarks by Ms. Wendy Spencer

Ms. Spencer thanked Shamina Singh and the other board members and noted that the success the agency enjoyed while she was the CEO was really a team effort.

Ms. Spencer said that at the annual awards meeting for the Voice of National Service the previous evening, she had found it amazing to see the local, state, and federal support for the work that the board, CNCS, and our volunteers are doing. It was heartwarming for her to see how the work of CNCS had influenced these important elected officials, important corporate leaders, and important bipartisan leaders all over the country. The work started right here at the board meeting, where the members make sure that the agency is providing opportunities for Americans to serve and for the Social Innovation Fund to invest in so many places.

Ms. Spencer recounted that Senator Blunt, the leading CNCS appropriator in the U.S. Senate, had wonderful words of support and had noted how he had been influenced by seeing firsthand

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the effect of AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and other investments in his state. Ms. Spencer said that when she spoke with him after the event, the Senator reiterated his support and talked about how closely he and Chairman Tom Cole, the CNCS appropriator on the House side, are working to secure more support for the agency and the work that it does.

Ms. Spencer closed by thanking the board for the recognition and again emphasizing that it was truly a team effort that had led to so much success.

The board voted to approve the resolution honoring Ms. Spencer, and then the board chair opened the meeting for public comments and recognized Eugene Sofer.

Remarks by Eugene Sofer

Mr. Sofer introduced himself as the Washington representative of the National Association of RSVP Directors. He read a statement on behalf of Betty Ruth, president of the National Association of RSVP Directors. Ms. Ruth's statement said that RSVP is CNCS's largest program, enrolling more than a quarter of a million seniors, aged 55 and above, in volunteer service. However, RSVP is in crisis. Approximately 75 RSVP programs with more than 60,000 volunteers have left the program since 2015. She believes that these relinquishments are the result of budget cuts and administrative burdens, some imposed by statute and some by CNCS. She hopes that the new administration will lift its freeze on regulations and provide much-needed relief. She believes that CNCS is pricing RSVP out of rural America and believes that CNCS policy should be based on a review of why programs relinquish [their grant awards]. She urges CNCS to plan strategically for the future by asking what RSVP's mission should be. She invites CNCS to work with the Association to be change agents to strengthen RSVP and reduce administrative burdens so that its volunteers can do their service more effectively and cost-efficiently, better align performance measures to reflect the reality of RSVP, resolve the many issues that exist with state offices and their inability to consistently administer RSVP across the country, develop federal agency partnerships to take advantage of RSVP's untapped potential, and improve CNCS's messaging about RSVP.

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Board Vice-Chair Dean Reuter asked Mr. Sofer if he could say more about the major impediments that lead to relinquishment of RSVP grants and to address those items that are within the board's purview in existing legislation.

Mr. Sofer responded that he thinks the board can be helpful by reviewing the administrative burdens CNCS has imposed on RSVP's programs. He believes CNCS is collecting lots of data but then not using it. The agency should collect the data it needs and use the data it collects. Currently there is more emphasis on compliance and less on providing services. Mr. Sofer would like to see the two balanced. Secondly, he believes it would be beneficial to have more federal partnerships. The average cost of an RSVP volunteer is \$200 a year. Because it is relatively cheap, it is easy to have many high-level, highly educated, experienced professionals to teach, provide healthcare, and attend to other needs of seniors. He thinks CNCS needs to be more aggressive in pursuing interagency partnerships. The third area Mr. Sofer would like to see addressed is CNCS's messaging about RSVP. Mr. Sofer feels there is a wide disparity between the amount of time, energy, and space devoted to the messaging for Senior Corps programs and that given to AmeriCorps programs. Senior Corps enjoys great popularity on the Hill, and more consistent messaging about RSVP and other Senior Corps programs in general would be beneficial to the program and the agency.

There being no further questions, the board chair thanked Mr. Sofer for coming to the board meeting and said that the board would definitely take the comments under consideration and work with the staff to address them.

Conclusion of the Meeting

Ms. Singh concluded the board meeting by thanking the members of the board, the CNCS staff, and the members of the public for joining. She noted that this meeting had been an important and enlightening discussion, whereupon she adjourned the board meeting.