



November 16, 2009

Dear State Service Commission, State Volunteer Association and Volunteer Center Directors:

At the pre-conference workshop held prior to the beginning of the National Conference on Volunteering and Service, we agreed that collaboration and partnership among state service commissions, state volunteer center associations and individual volunteer centers are critical to our impact as facilitators of service and volunteering. For example, given the implementation of the Kennedy Serve America Act, a significant amount of pre-planning and coordination stands before us as we begin to respond to the exciting expansions of existing national and community service programs as well as the new programs authorized in the Act.

One key new program created by the Serve America Act is the Volunteer Generation Fund. We believe from the discussions at the workshop that it's most important for State Commissions and State Volunteer Associations, Volunteer Centers and Action Centers to begin formal discussions regarding planning how we could utilize financial resources that support the activities envisioned by this Fund. While many in the room had developed these partnerships, it was also clear that additional work needed to be prioritized to support the building of these relationships.

The following are links to connect to State Commissions by state, as well as volunteer centers, action centers and associations:

- At www.statecommissions.org, you will find the American Association of State Commission's Website.
- At www.mivolunteers.org you will find the Volunteer Centers of Michigan Website. From here you can access the link "National Network of State Associations" which will lead you to upcoming meeting notices, minutes of past meetings and more.

By virtue of receiving this communication, you are a leader in this field, and we ask you to take the initiative to begin, or to help continue, the discussions that will help move partnerships among these organizations forward. This is a shared leadership responsibility you have for your entity, and we are empowering you to take the steps necessary to rally like leaders around the potential importance of utilizing this Fund to help support volunteer efforts throughout your state.

As we go through the appropriations process, we ask each of you to pay particular attention to the budget levels for the Volunteer Generation Fund. As you face increased demands for additional volunteers primarily due to the current economic situation, this resource might be the key ingredient to enable more people to serve and to help address critical needs in your community. Currently, the FY2010 Labor, HHS bill which may include up to \$8 million for the Volunteer Generation Fund (depending on the results of the House/Senate conference) is still pending in the US Congress. We hope you will educate decision makers on the importance of these funds to your community.

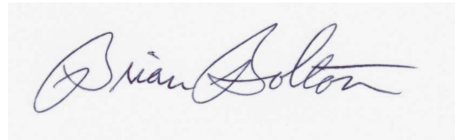
Attached to this letter you will find the summary of notes and recommendations from our time together in San Francisco. You will also find a recap of the tabletop discussions that took place. We trust that as you reacquaint yourselves with the important discussions that took place, you will be reminded of the huge opportunities that lie before us and the importance of establishing collaboration among our partner networks.

Over the course of the coming months, we'll reach out in a number of ways to reignite this important conversation. As we look ahead to our 2010 National Conference in New York City, we look forward to hearing about the partnerships you have developed and the work you are now able to do because of this Fund.

Sincerely,



Bill Basl
America's Service Commissions



Brian Bolton
National Network of State Associations
of Volunteer Centers and HandsOn Affiliates



Amy Smith
HandsOn Network

Summary of Notes and Recommendations
New Era of Partnership Meeting
National Conference, 2009

Purpose of meeting: To consider *all* the ways State Commissions and HandsOn Action Centers can work together in each state.

Attendance: 135 people representing:

- State Commissions
- Hands On/Volunteer Centers
- State Offices
- State Associations
- Miscellaneous other organizations (Senior Service America, National Nonprofit Council, etc.)

Highlights of Responses submitted: (includes ideas stated frequently)

Question 1: One question – answer would set us free:

- What is the common purpose of service organizations in each state: service and volunteerism to what end/objective?
- Turf: dialogue
- How do we build a dynamic system that engages the diversity of partners to increase the impact of volunteerism?
- People's personalities and willingness to collaborate
- How do we have a common purpose, have same plan? State Plan idea?
- How do we agree on a common goal/branding message and implement and execute our common goal to increase volunteerism?
- Forming clear objective for service and volunteerism and how do we get there?
- Collaborate with volunteer centers and Senior Corps, not duplicate

Question 2: What would success look like?

- Work together to increase capacity of commission and affiliates to apply for grants and develop sustainability
- Relationship building is critical: how do we go about making this happen?
- Collaboration must be set up for all partners to meet one common goal
- De-politicize the commission seats
- Actual projects: successful applications of collaborative partnerships
- Shared Resources, such as VISTA
- What key ground rules can we create so that everyone comes into the collaboration on equal footing?
- Forming successful partnerships with common goals without turf wars, realizing we are benefiting cause/volunteerism by working together

Question 3: what's the one thing you can do this week?

- Get to know the players; so many people are new; invite to state meetings
- Reach out and meet key partners
- Collaborate on efforts in State Service Plan process
- Eliminate silos
- Networking, exchanging ideas, resources, motivation and incentives, initiate, implement, invite
- Share stories of success
- Pick up the phone and form/strengthen relationships with partnering organizations

A New Era of Partnerships

Responses to Tabletop Discussion Questions

1. What's the one question in our goal to collaborate and partner, that if we had the answer to it, would set us free?

- Political, territorial coordination and communication
- In-fighting "united front"
- What is the common purpose of service organizations in each state: service and volunteerism to what end/objective?
- Turf – dialogue
- Geographical separation: prioritize need to area?
- Share ownership
- How to fund and find the staff to do this (now)?
- Who are the key player in one's state – to begin the dialogue/conversation collaboration
- What would happen if we could harness volunteers in our state without focus on dollars?
- We must remember the rural aspects of each state
- How do we identify the community needs?
- Don't re-create the wheel – use the existing experts to help us do it better; seek out existing experts
- How do we build a dynamic system that engages the diversity of partners to increase the impact of volunteerism?
- How would you define your relationship? Examples of collaborative efforts.
- Tour of volunteer centers?
- What is the goal and how will we get there?
- How do we fire all the people who aren't doing their job now?
- People's personalities and willingness to collaborate
- How do we have a common purpose, have same plan? State plan idea?
- How do we build leadership?

- How can we create a “united front” and collaborate together to secure resources without competition?
- How do you get parties involved to give up some of their ownership?
- How do we agree on a common goal/branding message and implement and execute our common goal to increase volunteerism?
- Forming clear objective for service and volunteerism and how do we get there?
- Intention great, realistically to get funds to local nonprofits is tricky
- State commissions can help more; lines of communication are misconstrued
- Lack of recognition of Senior Corps
- Collaborate with Volunteer Centers and Sr. Corps, not duplicate

2. What would success of partnership/collaboration look like?

- Knowing what each other are doing and cross-volunteer (advisory boards) partnerships - resources need to get to rural/small; collaborate on grants access
- Multiple funding streams to increase capacity so that all individuals who want to volunteer would have the opportunities and resources to do so
- Work together to increase capacity of commission and affiliates to apply for a administer grants and develop sustainability
- Relationship building is critical – how do we go about making this happen?
- We need a common message
- Collaboration must be set up for all partners to meet one common goal
- Work to engage your local state commission board members – they can make great allies
- Convene stakeholders
- De-politicize the commission seats
- Adequate financial and other resources are available and utilized to increase capacity and leadership so that all individuals who want to volunteer have the opportunity and resources to do so
- Actual projects – successful applications of collaborative partnership
- Shared resources, such as VISTA
- What key ground rules can we create so that everyone comes into the collaboration on equal footing?
- Shared leadership: trust, communication, adaptable and fluid, win/win
- Minimizing on duplication
- Shared risk
- Maximizing on strengths
- Understanding responsibilities
- Community outreach and civic engagement
- Rural resources
- Communication gaps
- Building collaborations
- Positive outcomes for everyone, including support for small grassroots organizations
- Sharing power

- Forming successful partnerships with common goals without turf wars, realizing we are benefiting cause/volunteerism by working together
- Articulate measureable surveys and outcomes
- Collaborations = a sign of success; functionality vs. audience
- Diversity of funding

3. When we leave this session today, what's the one thing you can do this week to further the goal of partnership/collaboration?

- Share stories of success
- How do we build a dynamic system that engages the diversity of partners to increase volunteerism?
- Get to know the players – so many people are new. Invite to state meetings.
- Reach out and meet key partners, e.g. state commission ED; State CNCS Director.
- Partners at table must be able to report on specific area.
- Commissions and Associations are not all linked
- Utilize conference to open the conversation with stakeholders in our respective states
- Collaborate on efforts in State Service Plan process
- Take group ownership
- Must break down communication barriers
- Keep an open mind
- Eliminate silos
- Networking, exchanging ideas, resources, motivation and incentives, initiate, implement, invite
- Share stories of success
- Offer support to other agencies
- Share information and strategies
- Work on communication
- Pick up the phone and form/strengthen relationship with partnering organizations
- Issues of training Americorps members to be volunteer coordinators of other agencies
- Look at rural collaborations
- Gather information and apply it