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**Kansas Volunteer Commission Meeting
Virtual Meeting**

**April 4th, 2023**

**Members in Attendance:** Amy Pinger, Ginger Williams, David Battey, Linn Hogg, Ben Jones, Stephanie Kupper, Cindy Miles, Emily Riner, Mark Stump, Daniel Cruz, Carolyn Campbell

**Members Not in Attendance**: Selena Eckstrom, Melanie Haas, Barbara Hickert, Joe Marlow, Christian Ramirez

**Ex-Officio Members in Attendance:**

**Ex-Officio Members Not in Attendance:**

**Staff in Attendance**: Jessica Dorsey, Kay Emerson, Amanda Noll, Elaine Rodriguez, Tierney Kirtdoll, Haley Matherly, Sarah Palubinski

**WELCOME AND COMMISSIONER PLEDGE**

Chairwoman Amy Pinger called the meeting to order at 10:00AM. The Commissioners recited the Commissioner pledge.

**ROLL CALL OF COMMISSIONERS**

Elaine Rodriguez led the roll call.

**ANNIVERSARIES**

Elaine Rodriguez and Kay Emerson

Kay won Ron Alexander Scholarship from Kansas Leadership Center to teach Leadership to others.

**INTRODUCTION OF NEW STAFF**

Haley Matherly – Joined us in December. Has certification in Volunteer Administration. Serving as Volunteer Engagement Coordinator. Selected as Kansas Emerging Leader from Leadership Kansas. Topeka Top 20 Under 40. Volunteers with Lasagna Love. President of M.O.V.E. Excited for upcoming opportunities to collaborate. Runs KAVE and Service Enterprise Certification. Started book club.

**NEW COMMISSIONERS**

Linn Hogg – Volunteers in Action – Barton County Community College – most western commissioner on our commission. Also Certified in Volunteer Administration. Service Enterprise Certified. 2nd to certify in the state in late 2021 or 2022. March Commissioner Networking call AARP state networking representative. Nice to see all the work that goes on firsthand. VGF recipient.

Melanie Haas – State Board Representative District 2 – Bonner Springs – Board Chair – Joining us from Northeast part of the state. Not on the call today will spotlight her in June.

**2023-2024 AMERICORPS GRANTS**

Acknowledge Reviewers, led by Kay. Sarah Palubinski joined her to help learn to promote that across the state. Ben, Emily and Stephanie part took in the reviewing. Kelli Byrne financial consultant KSDE, Monique Saunders public representative. Difficult. More grants than we’ve ever had. Lots of effort and we thank you.

**11 Organizations Applied for Operational Grants**

Boys & Girls Club Manhattan

Boys & Girls Club Lawrence

Harvesters

USD 260

Kansas City Teacher Residency

Emporia State University

Center for Supportive Communities

Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks

Wichita State University

Kansas Association for Conservation and Environmental Education

Additional Public Health NOFO Applicant needed to be added to presentation. Not formula dollars that we allocate but still want blessing.

7 operational returning

4 planning grants able to move into operational grant

Wyandotte County went straight to AmeriCorps

Largest Portfolio we’ve had in at least the last decade.

Will spend all of the formula dollars and then some.

Boys & Girls Club of Manhattan (late planning grant) Hannah Coash moved to BGCM. Applied for separate planning grant as no longer in partnership with BGCL.

Focused on education. AmeriCorps members for academic and social supports.

Improving social and emotional skills and academic engagement.

Boys & Girls Club of Lawrence (similar building off success)

Same program model to use AmeriCorps members to support students. Increase from 85 to 95 members. Smaller slot types as full-time slot not successful in KS.

Harvesters

Addressing poverty and COVID19 pandemic. Engaging volunteers. Use AmeriCorps members in pantries in 16 locations across KS. Some will serve on Missouri side. Signed MOU as program operates in both states. Will continue to happen in 2023-2024 program year. Operating one AmeriCorps program versus multi-state. Members have better experience with one set of rules versus two sets of rules. Disparity between states. Eliminates that disparity.

Q. Are these 15 members full-time

A. No very few programs request full-time for reasons mentioned earlier.

1. Harvesters have 7 full-time and 8 half-time from Commissioner Kupper.

Derby Public Schools USD 260

Propose huge leap from the past. Using high-school students to serve as AmeriCorps members in elementary grades. Improve academic achievement through tutoring. Early childhood program to ensure kindergarteners ready for kindergarten.

Q. Does the Presidential Volunteer Service Award factor into this program?

A. I don’t think it calls back to this but it could. I wrote a note about it.

Kansas City Teacher Residency

Was planning. Now Operational into 2023-2024. Alternative teacher preparation program AmeriCorps members as co-teachers, year long process, continue to serve in urban, diverse, high-poverty, high-needs schools. Missouri and Kansas MOU. May continue to operate two different programs. KS Board of Education may approve them during board meeting. If they do not approve them we may reconsider.

Emporia State University

Propose to use AmeriCorps members in 8 counties for literacy interventions. Learning loss during COVID19 pandemic.

Center for Supportive Communities

Douglas County serving students who have truancy issue to have supports unexcused absences, academic success. Mentors.

United Way of Kaw Valley

UWDC and UWT merged to form UWKV. Expand health and human service organization capacity. Supports to those agencies and additional Douglas County volunteers.

Looking at expanding into Shawnee County. Interest in partnering with Kansas Judicial Branch on evictions and debt collections, Justice Corps (?) possible.

Q. Are you going through these asking us to vote on them as complete list.

A. You vote on portfolio recommendation as a whole.

Kupper last four not agreed to these programs to be funded fully. Kay asked would you fund if funding was available but only United Way of Kaw Valley made the reviewer cut. She wanted to make sure that point was noted.

Kansas Department of Wildlife & Parks

Programing to improve parks and publicly managed state lands. Education and environmental programming

Wichita State University

Poverty reduction and youth development in mentoring. Programing to mentor students and out-of-school enrichment activities.

Kansas Association for Conservation and Environmental Education

Site-based programming and development for teachers Pre-K and across state.

PLANNING GRANTS

Ballard Center

Early Childhood program. Develop potential Operational Grant to stabilize programs for families. Non-profit. Serves low-income.

Immunize Kansas Coalition

Planning grant to consider whether AmeriCorps members could address health equity, and health disparities.

Federal Allocation

2.51 million dollars. Highest we’ve ever received. 200,000 dollars in carry-over dollars.

Recruitment issues. America Rescue Plan Dollars not even touched.

Will still barely tap into funds even if we fully fund everyone (which not recommended)

Regarding requests and allocation:

1-9 yes to fund.

Reduce KS Dept of Wildlife & Parks

Split vote on KS Dept Conservation and Wildlife Education

Applications not as well written this year. Four point spread between lowest and highest. Applications get better as they learn to write.

If we only fund 7 we will have to return funds to the federal government.

Grant reviewers review the quality of the application and recommendation, and the staff then makes the formula and recommendations to the commissioners. For that reason, is that we would in fact fund all of them. Derby funded at a lesser amount. Even with an increase of high school students they still returned over $100,000 dollars this year.

Emporia State Budget needs significant revision. Serious budget error was overlooked. Have to get that number back down. Kansas Department of Wildlife & Parks need a significant cut as they return $150,000 but asked for increase even after returning funds.

Do recommend continued funding of Wichita State University. Did not resonate well in the application but they have done a lot in the Wichita area to prepare. Very participatory and engaged and the environment and education needs for Kansas Assoc for Conservation and Environmental Education. Decrease their funding and make them specialize.

Recommend funding both planning grants at $50,000 level.

Discussion:

Thanks to Kay for leading out this work and supporting team on these efforts. Recommendations are appropriate. KDWP, KACEE, educational element, environment should be one of our priority areas. Applications as they stand meet our priority areas but may need to expand that further.

Congratulations and thank you to the entire committee. A lot to look at here and congratulations

Q. Derby returning funds KDWP returning funds. Any others on list that return funding?

A. Yes.

Q. Sounds like of the $313,000 did KDWP return $150,000 of it. Derby returned $205,000 and they returned a large amount - $102,000 approx.

United Way of Kaw Valley returned some dollars. Fixed versus requested Cost-Reimbursement Grant. Their unexpended funds will decline if going to Cost-Reimbursement.

Q. If we gave them $300,000 last time and they returned it, should we give them $300,000 this year??? Seems like giving $150,000 is a better amount. That’s just a couple of observations for this year.

A. Mindful of new endeavor for high-school with USD260 Derby. Lower number can be possible. KDWP moving to fixed from cost-reimbursement, different grant model may expend more of their funds. Could be talked into reduction.

Q. KDWP Long-Time Grantee with a long history of returning money? Derby?

A. Yes on both.

Q. Concerning.

Comment: Agree with David. KDWP ought to know better. Budget and expenditure must know better. USD260 Derby school district, they know better than to ask for money and not spend it. Public education under attack and doesn’t look good optics wise.

Comment: Cautious on Derby with program revamp. Did change programming and expansion. Supportive of funding drop but any further could hurt their latitude. KDWP did not vote to fund them. Cannot recruit is their issues. We could drop KDWP.

Comment: Ditto to Ben. Returning funds during COVID19. Can’t find one VISTA to replace one that our organization had. Most organizations not prepared to find new members or employees due to what we’re going through.

Comment: Derby diversifying that mix. High-School to College age initiative, rather them having the funding they need. Trying to pivot. New group and aware of that opportunity. Don’t cut their budget just monitor them more closely to see the return on our investment.

Comment: Derby high-school situation is because of recruitment struggle across the state. What can we do to make individuals want to serve. Living stipend and time-requirements are high. Cost of living increase is that calculated in?

1. Fixed grant less than cost of MSY. Hard to see budget for that and see living allowances. But on Derby we do see that.

Comment: Per the formula if money is returned does that affect anything in the future? Does it affect the federal match forever? Etc.

1. No. No effect on personal funding allocation. If there are many Commissions returning funds then Congress will ask questions. Not bound by Kansas alone. Can have an impact in the long-term.

Comment: Is 1st time going through process. Is an education. Concern there are some quality issues with the applications. 8-11 rankings are not quality applications to them. There is a need but their solutions are not well-planned.

Comment: Agree that certain applications are not good. Wanted everybody to get over the finish line. Difference in excellence. Success and how it looks not clear to everyone. There were some things they could not clarify. Felt unfortunate. Completely understand what they’re trying to do. Don’t want to spend money on something not high-quality. Will this be successful as they envision it? After asking questions a few never got there. Bottom four don’t make it across the line for review committee. Reflects badly on the State of Kansas not using their dollars to the utmost benefit or giving precious AmeriCorps members the experience and treatment, they deserve. As a commissioner and a grant reviewer, cannot see funding the bottom two at all. KACEE and KDWP.

Q. You had said going from reimbursement to fixed. Do they keep whole amount versus what they return.

A. No, not correct. They only get reimbursed for the members hours spent.

Bulk of conversation hinging on the last four applicants.

Reduce Derby – redesign may help.

Circle back on other portfolio members.

United Way Kaw Valley from Fixed to Cost-Reimbursement.

KDWP from Cost-Reimbursement to Fixed.

Another reason why people move to fixed is reimbursement dollars are sort of behind the scenes versus upfront. May not have funds to reimburse.

Also agree, KDWP should be reduced. Not recommend WSU or KACEE be funded recommended on their application. Kick it over to other commissioners on whether to fund.

Comment: Do not support. Would like to see them all funded.

Comment: In support of Wichita State. Can’t speak to KACEE. Abstain.

Reviewer Comment solicited: On the fence for United Way of Kaw Valley. They missed some of the marks. Teeter on KDWP due to response on not being able to fill positions. Environment is important and in the future. Reduced amount recommendation. Last two WSU no feeling either way. KACEE lack the ability to tout their program. Asking for a lot considering that it’s their first year.

Comment: Narrative Minimum Viable Product. Be clear and articulate that. Was it skill or will? That we didn’t get the response we wanted. New program won’t be most articulate. We must look at what they presented. We must promote grant writing to them. Don’t want us to say that wording doesn’t fit what we wanted. Have to have some standard for them. KDWP there’s controllables and uncontrollables. Barriers in staffing and difficulties in all aspects. What can these organizations control?

Q. How many other states return formula dollars?

A. Do not know the answer to that. Most states don’t as they receive competitive funding. Generally, don’t spend competitive and return formula.

Comment: Don’t want to fund organizations that do not deserve it. We don’t want to enable applications but want to realize organizations have challenges. Helpful but not easy discussion. We may have the money should we give them the funding? Hold them to the fire and reduce them if they don’t perform in the future. Richest discussion in many years on the Commission.

Comment: Offer issues on funding bottom four. Feels uncomfortable voting on the entire portfolio. Most of the top 7 are fantastic. Can we vote on partial portfolio? Can we decrease funding on bottom 4?

Will vote on 7 as one slate.

Others will be voted on one-by-one.

Comment: KDWP and others serve around where they are located and do a lot. Western Kansas passionate about. Keep that in mind.

Comment: Derby $160,000 or less? Given history. Wants $140,000 or less.

1. Half as much to let them work through recruitment issues.

Comment: Derby is changing what their doing to improve recruitment. Keep at current or take it down minimally.

**Motion for allocation for ten of the fourteen applicants** made by Commissioner Battey and seconded by Commissioner Miles. (Plus, Wyandotte County $216,000 half-time)

Vote was to all in favor of motion. Motion passed.

**One by one allocation discussion:**

United Way of Kaw Valley: fixed to cost-reimbursement. Motion by Commissioner Riner for funding $172,687. Seconded by Commissioner Williams. Vote was 5 for and 2 against. 13 voting members majority of seven. Split on individual vote. Put to absent members. Based on present members. Quorum majority of members voting. United Way of Kaw Valley is funded. Motion passed.

Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks: farthest reaching program in the State. Remote areas are difficult to recruit to. Educational and upkeep of Kansas State Parks. Improvements to shelter houses, fishing spaces, archery, disaster recovery and response. $250,000 agreement on two commissioners. Commissioner comment is unable to spend $150,000 dollars. Unsure how can recruit. Recommend $150,000. Why haven’t they increased staffing. Answer was too hard. Have a governor that was the director of parks & wildlife. Governor was a champion for them. They will never come off the grant system is their feeling. $150,000 recommendation. What stood out for one commissioner was that Kansas state parks operate without state tax dollars. Operate on Park C funds if cost increase occurred. Would have to have new positions approved by Kansas legislature, so Governor is not enough to approve. There’s still a need there and they should continue to come to us for dollars. Thoughts that $150,000 is too low. Market competitiveness, at least provide them with a baseline. Things beyond their control to increase staffing, even foundational stuff. Living wage and reality must be considered. $250,000? Recommendation on $225,000.

Motion by Commissioner Battey on $225,000. Motion by Commissioner Miles to second. Vote was 6 to 1 split. Motion passed.

Wichita State University: Fourth Year also. Predominantly education intermediary. Public Health space. Motion to approve $280,122 by Commissioner Jones and seconded by Commissioner Miles. Vote was 6 to 1 split. Motion passed to fund at requested amount.

Kansas Assoc. for Environmental Education: Cost reduction to 5 MSY. Wants to place members in environmental education programs across the state. Supporting the professional development of teachers. Cost reduction to 3 MSY would be $86,400. Conversation on recommended funding level. Requested $192,960. Proposed $144,400. Alternative of $86,400 minimum, half of what was requested. First year operational grant, mid-year through the planning grant. Commissioner Battey comfortable with reduction to $86,400.

Comment: Plan to send program coordinator to 8 regional convenings. Stood firm on needing to do that. Room to be cut quite a bit. Lowest amount can show success and grow program from there. 3 MSY general recommendation.

Clarification: They amended to training 7 online. 2 staff to annual training. Monthly program coordinator site visits. Budget referenced.

Motion to approve KACEE at $86,400 Commissioner Battey makes motion. Commissioner Hogg seconded the motion. Vote was 5 to 1 split. Funding at reduced amount passed.

Wyandotte County decision making is not ours to decide but we have all oversight.

**May Coffee with Commissioners – Committee Conversation do commitees add value?**

**STATE SERVICE PLAN UPDATE**

Hold for future Commission Meeting

**COMMITTEE DISCUSSIONS**

Hold for future Commission Meeting

**ADJOURNMENT**

Next meeting will be on Tuesday, June 5, 2023 via Zoom Webinar from 10AM to 12PM.

Dorsey adjourned the meeting.