

**Corporation for National and Community Service**  
**Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting**  
**May 15, 2013**  
**9:02 a.m. – 10:15 a.m., EST**

The Board of Directors convened in Washington, D. C. The following members of the Board were present:

Laysha Ward, Chair

Eric Tanenblatt, Vice Chair

Rick Christman

Jane Hartley

Hyepin Im

Matthew McCabe

Phyllis Segal

**Chair's Opening Remarks**

Board Chair, Laysha Ward, opened the meeting by welcoming those in the room and those who were joining by telephone. On behalf of the Board, Ms. Ward invited members of the public in attendance to comment on the business of the Board at the end of the meeting. She indicated that anyone wishing to do so should sign up so that the Board can adjust the agenda accordingly.

Ms. Ward gave a quick overview of the agenda for the meeting. She said she would provide opening remarks and introductions and then summarize what occurred at the Retreat yesterday. Next, Ms. Ward would ask Ms. Wendy Spencer, the CEO, to provide an overview of her perspective on the work of the Agency since the last Board meeting. Then she would call on members of the Board to discuss Agency matters related to programs and strategy, external relations and public engagement, as well as oversight and accountability. Following that, the Board would approve the minutes from the last Board meeting and the Board would then close with an opportunity for any public comments.

Ms. Ward then provided remarks beginning with a few words of thanks to the other Board members for the time and expertise they shared not only during the last few days but throughout the year. Each Board member was actively engaged and involved in varying committees throughout the year. Each gave tirelessly of their time, energy, and expertise in partnership with the staff and others involved in national service around the country to ensure that the work of the Corporation has great impact.

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Ms. Ward also thanked the CNCS staff for their commitment and leadership in the field of national service. Ms. Ward observed that it really is a team effort for the Board and staff collectively to bring all of the great work of the Corporation to life.

Ms. Ward then summarized the Board's activities during the preceding Retreat. Jonathan Greenblatt, Special Assistant to the President and Director of the Office of Social Innovation and Civic Participation, shared with the Board the powerful experience of the previous month when AmeriCorps members visited the White House and shared their stories of service and the impact service had made in the lives of others. The President was there, as well as representatives from the First Lady's office, and what was scheduled as a 15 to 20 minute visit turned into well over an hour with lots of questions being asked and listening to those AmeriCorps members sharing their advice, experiences and expertise. The President invited the AmeriCorps members into the Oval Office and continued the dialogue with them. Mr. Greenblatt stated that the entire visit was a reflection of the power of the story of national service and the impact of our work in communities. He noted that it was a credit to the CNCS team that the AmeriCorps members were so well prepared and that the quality of the preparation was evident during the entire visit.

Ms. Ward stated that after Mr. Greenblatt concluded his presentation, the Board spent time tying all the areas together to ensure that all of the work was connected to the mission and the strategic plan. Ms. Ward related that there was an in-depth discussion regarding the measurement of growth focusing on the critical elements necessary to the development of future relationships, both public and private, that will enable the expansion of National Service. The Board parlayed that discussion into a presentation around the CNCS branding strategy.

Ms. Ward noted that the Board is also very highly engaged in support of the CNCS plan for continued oversight and accountability with a particular focus on internal controls. She stated that the Oversight, Governance, and Audit Committee has spent a great deal of time putting together a recommended strategy and moving that forward. She thanked everyone for their effort on this matter and noted it is critical to the success of CNCS to have strong oversight governance. Ms. Ward then presented to the Board a Resolution directing the CEO to continue to implement the Oversight and Accountability Action Plan that was developed, otherwise known as the Internal Controls Improvement Plan, and to apprise the Board regularly of the progress of that implementation. The Resolution demonstrates the Board's confidence in CNCS senior management and that senior management shares the Board's articulated commitment to take all necessary steps to improve controls, and reduce waste, fraud, and abuse.

**Consideration of the Resolution on the Implementation of the Oversight and Accountability Action Plan.** The Board considered and approved by unanimous voice vote

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the Resolution directing the CEO to continue to implement the Oversight and Accountability Action Plan and to apprise the Board regularly of the progress of that implementation.

Ms. Ward stated that the next items on the agenda at the Retreat were a briefing by the Inspector General (IG), followed by a briefing by the union representative. Ms. Ward emphasized that the Board is very committed to having the IG and the union representative at each Board meeting in order to have a continual dialogue on progress made and opportunities for improvement.

Ms. Ward also noted that the Board had presentations at the Retreat on three distinct priority initiatives for CNCS, which were important for the Board to understand where CNCS is making progress. The three initiatives include the Volunteer Generation Fund, The Social Innovation Fund, and the field of research and data. This last initiative is critically important because it allows CNCS to be able to articulate how it's making progress against its stated objectives.

The Board also received a briefing by Dr. Chris Spera on the research and data initiative. Ms. Ward noted that it is really important for the Board and CNCS to promote the importance and impact of service both at the national and community levels and data and research help to tell that story more effectively. The Board also heard from Gary Haze, a professional consultant who had generously donated his time. Mr. Haze assisted the Board in the annual CEO review required by the Serve America Act. Ms. Ward said that Mr. Haze had world-class experience in CEO performance evaluations and is consulting with the Board to ensure we set up an effective, efficient, and sustainable process for a CEO review.

Ms. Ward said that the Board wrapped up the Retreat with a conversation about the future of the Board as several Board members would soon be completing their terms of service. Ms. Ward saluted the performance of Eric Tanenblatt, the vice-chair of the Board who served for six years. She said that Eric had been a tireless advocate for service, not only through his service on this Board, but in his past service with the Peace Corps, when he was with President Bush's administration, and in his own community. Ms. Ward then recognized Eric and invited him to speak.

Mr. Tanenblatt stated that it had been an honor for him to serve. His finest memories while serving on the Board had been when he was in the field, swearing in AmeriCorps members and talking to them. Mr. Tanenblatt recognized Mr. Robert Velasco, Chief Operating Officer, and his commitment to oversight and accountability. He recognized Wendy Spencer as a dynamic CEO and also recognized his fellow Board members.

Ms. Ward then recognized Board member Rick Christman, who has been a Board member for approximately six months but whose term is about to expire as he was brought on to the Board to

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fill a vacated position. Ms. Ward noted that Rick had had a tremendous impact on the Board in that short period of time. He had immediately jumped right into Committee work and his questions and comments reflected that he was deeply committed to service, both nationally and locally. He leads by example and it is obvious he believes in the future of service.

Mr. Christman thanked the Board Chair and stated that he had had the honor recently of speaking to some volunteers who were in Kentucky and being honored for their service. The young people were bestowed the honor of a Kentucky Colonelship. Mr. Christman said that it made him so proud to be an American. The enthusiasm and optimism of these young people is channeled by the Corporation and he said he was really proud to have been a part of that.

**Chief Executive Officer's Report**

Ms. Ward recognized Ms. Spencer, the CNCS CEO, to provide remarks. Ms. Spencer thanked Eric Tanenblatt and Rick Christman and all the Board members for their contributions. She gave a special thank you to the National Service field, to the CNCS grantees and to all service members who make National Service come to life by making an impact on the ground every day. Ms. Spencer stated that CNCS always focuses on the Serve America Act, the strategic plan and our priorities. The four priorities, based on the Serve America Act and the strategic plan, are Expanding economic opportunities, Driving innovation and impact, Growing National Service and volunteerism, and Explaining why service matters. Those four initiatives together constitute what CNCS refers to as "EDGE."

Ms. Spencer explained how CNCS is focused on each of the four priorities. CNCS is focusing research on how volunteering can be a pathway to employment and that report will be released in the fall of 2013. CNCS is looking at ways to leverage National Service and volunteerism to help people and communities get and stay on a path to economic independence. Ms. Spencer felt that most Americans have, as a top priority, the ability to be independent and provide for themselves and their family. Ms. Spencer said the second priority, Driving innovation and impact, means thinking of new solutions for old problems and driving innovation and impact through programs. For instance, in February 2013, CNCS announced more than \$14 million in funding to more than 200 organizations across the country. For the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), one of the key programs in the Senior Corps portfolio, CNCS held the first RSVP grant competition since 1971. In order to ensure that these programs have real impact, they will report to CNCS using new performance measures developed by CNCS.

Ms. Spencer also noted that in March CNCS announced a new partnership with the National Guard Bureau for an initiative entitled Joining Community Forces which taps AmeriCorps VISTA members to strengthen National Guard support services throughout the country. Ms.

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Spencer said that last month CNCS had been invited for the first time to testify before the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs. She said it was an honor and a privilege to share the great work that CNCS is laser-focused on to support our veterans and military families. During her appearance before the Senate Committee she discussed elevating National Service as a cost-effective, scalable solution to challenges facing Service members, Veterans, and their families. Ms. Spencer stated that no higher priority existed at the moment than to help Veterans reengage in their neighborhoods.

Ms. Spencer next stated that last week CNCS announced new commitments to support the long-term recovery in communities that have been hit recently by disasters. An example of this was the special one-time grant of nearly \$200,000.00 to expand the impact of the Texas RSVP in West, Texas, a program that's been on the frontlines of the recovery efforts since last month's explosion in West [at a fertilizer plant]. CNCS also announced grant resources of \$1.2 million for the ongoing work in Hurricane Sandy restoration. In Ms. Spencer's many visits to the region impacted by Hurricane Sandy, she found that that many elected officials and citizens expressed their gratitude for the AmeriCorps members and their efforts. Everyone expressed that recovery would not have been as quick as it was without CNCS volunteers. This was even more important after the spotlight of the media shifted to other concerns. Ms. Spencer noted that there is clearly not enough funding available to meet all the needs that CNCS has requests for, but that CNCS is making good decisions through due diligence based on the information available as it oversees the funding process.

Ms. Spencer next spoke about the "G" in EDGE, or Growing National Service and volunteerism. CNCS is growing them by creative new investments and partnerships. For example, Ms. Spencer said that in February CNCS announced the launch of School Turnaround AmeriCorps with the Department of Education. This three year \$ 15 million grant program will place AmeriCorps members in about 60 of the nation's lowest performing schools to boost student achievement, graduation rates, and college and career readiness.

Ms. Spencer noted President Obama's announcement of the new STEM AmeriCorps program at the White House Science Fair. Ms. Spencer also noted the "next wave" of National Service wherein CNCS will join other federal agencies and private sector partners to meet national goals through National Service, from improving education to building tomorrow's STEM workforce. She also noted that CNCS communicates with more than 150,000 email subscribers, and always touts the usefulness of [www.serve.gov](http://www.serve.gov) for those who wish to volunteer to find volunteer opportunities near where they live.

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Ms. Spencer next stated that the last “E” in EDGE is Explaining why service matters. She said that CNCS has had many opportunities in the past several months to highlight the value and impact of our work. Just recently, CNCS awarded five colleges and universities the highest Presidential honor for community service with the President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll. Ms. Spencer also briefed the Board about the success of AmeriCorps Week and also the first ever Mayor’s Day of Recognition for National Service on April 9, 2013. CNCS had 832 mayors supporting CNCS and lifting up National Service as a solution in their cities. Each Mayor had unique ways their volunteers engage in their cities based on the particular city’s needs and how their National Service programs engage and recruit volunteers to serve alongside CNCS Senior Corps and AmeriCorps members.

Ms. Spencer also noted that CNCS released the first Social Innovation Fund Investment report to explain the impact and reach of this program. The Social Innovation Fund, or SIF, is now in its third year and CNCS has documented over 174,000 citizens that have directly been impacted by SIF. The SIF program is now invested in 200 programs in 34 states. The SIF investment is leveraging almost 3 to 1 in private sector funding to match our grants. Ms. Spencer also said that CNCS had launched a new and improved website, [www.nationalservice.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov), which is a very dynamic website. CNCS just completed a great Senior Corps Week where it was announced that CNCS hit a 10 year high in senior volunteering. Three hundred and sixty thousand seniors are engaged formally in the Senior Corps program. It is the largest CNCS program, with the highest impact, and these volunteers are serving in about 55,000 locations across America. Forty-seven Governors issued Senior Corps Week proclamations indicating the impact that seniors have in the three CNCS Senior Corps programs.

Ms. Spencer concluded her report to the Board by stating that National Service and CNCS had great momentum and great work ahead. She looked forward to continuing to work with the Board, and with CNCS grantees, partners, and service members to advance the mission and make National Service, volunteerism, and social innovations central to meeting the nation’s challenges. She also thanked her fellow team members, preferring not to call them staff, who work very hard to ensure CNCS is responsive to the field and making good decisions every day.

### **Board Reports**

Ms. Ward called upon Board members to report for the Committees. Ms. Jane Hartley, the Vice-Chair of the External Relations Committee, reported on behalf of Lisa Quiroz, the Chair of the Committee who was unable to join the Board meeting. Ms. Hartley began by thanking Wendy and her team for their leadership. Ms. Hartley then briefed the Board on AmeriCorps Week for 2013, and provided an example in the State of Delaware where Senator Tom Carper, Senator

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Chris Coons, and Governor Jack Markell, together announced collaboration as part of a new Joining Community Forces initiative. The partnership will strengthen National Guard support services by providing access to the human capital of AmeriCorps VISTA members for all states and territories. Ms. Hartley stated that this initiative is very important as 1.5 million service members, guardsmen, and reservists return home in the next five years. Ms. Hartley then briefed the Board on the Mayor's Day of Recognition, when each Mayor officially recognized the work that AmeriCorps members and Senior Corps volunteers are doing to make cities better and stronger.

Ms. Hartley concluded by noting the Presidential recognition that recently occurred – within a 14 day period, National Service and CNCS programs received significant attention from the White House and from President Obama. On April 8, 2013, the President announced that he would name the CNCS Volunteer Generation Fund after President George H.W. Bush. The program's name pays tribute to a life devoted to public service and leadership in volunteerism. Ms. Hartley noted that while in office, President Bush started the Points of Light movement and signed the 1990 National Service Act [National and Community Service Act of 1990] which led to the creation of CNCS as a federal agency and ushered in a new era of bipartisan presidential leadership for service. On April 12, 2013, the President met with 12 AmeriCorps members, and ten days after meeting with the AmeriCorps members, President Obama announced a new initiative called STEM AmeriCorps at the White House Science Fair. STEM AmeriCorps is a multi-year initiative to place hundreds of AmeriCorps members in non-profits across the country who will mobilize science, technology, education, and math professionals to inspire young people to excel in STEM-related fields.

Ms. Ward thanked Ms. Hartley for her presentation and then called upon the Vice-Chair of the Program Budget and Evaluation Committee, Ms. Hyepin Im, to present to the Board on behalf of the Committee. Ms. Im stated that the Chair of the Committee, Ms. Margaret Kondracke, was unable to attend the Board meeting, but that she would like to highlight five items. First, Ms. Im reported that the Atlantic Region campus for NCCC is in the process of relocating from Perry Point, MD to Baltimore. They are already building strong relationships with the new community, including with the office of Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake. Second, Ms. Im said that the first members of the FEMA Corps from the Atlantic region will begin their service this fall, while the first FEMA Corps class from Vinton and Vicksburg campuses will be finishing their terms of service in June 2013. The first FEMA Corps class did outstanding work on Hurricane Sandy response and recovery efforts. Third, Ms. Im reported on the great work being done by the Social Innovation Fund, as documented in the SIF Report released this Spring. Fourth, Ms. Im briefed the Board on a study requested by Senator Tom Harkin's Office, where VISTA and the Office of Research and Evaluation conducted a survey assessing VISTA's pre-

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service orientation trainings. The study confirmed the importance of this training, as well as the subsequent coaching and supervision that takes place, as having the greatest impact on member success and satisfaction. Ms. Im concluded by noting the great work being done by the Office of Research and Evaluation, that will soon be made public, that will provide an evaluation framework for CNCS's "next wave of service" federal partnerships.

Ms. Ward then turned to the Chair of the Oversight, Governance, and Audit Committee, Ms. Phyllis Segal, for her report. Ms. Segal reported that the Committee had been briefed on the budget status for Fiscal Years 2013 and 2014. Ms. Segal felt that the Committee had received extensive briefings from CNCS on every matter that the Board has addressed. For Fiscal Year 2013, a full year continuing resolution was enacted on March 26, 2013 at a final funding level of \$994 million, which included the sequestration cut and represented a 5.23 percent reduction from the fiscal year 2012 enacted level. Regarding the Fiscal Year 2014 budget, the CNCS informed the Committee that the Congressional Budget justification was sent to Congress on April 10, 2013 and that CNCS leadership were providing briefings to Congressional staff on that budget request.

Ms. Segal stated that the second matter that the Committee has been paying very close attention to was the continued activity in CNCS regarding internal controls. The CEO established robust internal controls to ensure accountability and was setting the correct tone to meet the highest expectations for the Agency. Finally, Ms. Segal concluded by mentioning that the Committee has designed the process for the Board of Directors to conduct its annual review of the CEO as required by the Serve America Act and that process will begin shortly at the Agency in order to complete this review by the fall.

**Consideration of Prior Meeting's Minutes**

The Board considered and approved by voice vote the minutes for the public Board meeting held February 6, 2013.

**Public Comment**

Ms. Ward began the public comment session by introducing Mr. Tom Branen. Mr. Branen introduced himself as the Executive Director of America's Service Commissions. Mr. Branen stated that the America's Service Commission is the association for 53 state service commissions that administer AmeriCorps programs in every state, two territories, and the District of Columbia. Mr. Branen began by asking the Board to revisit a major policy change that was recently issued by CNCS and to invite the Board to a dialogue on how we can work together to grow service and expand service opportunities. Mr. Branen emphasized that the Commissions

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understand the challenging situation that CNCS faces due to the budget cuts to AmeriCorps State/National this year because of the sequester. The Commissions also appreciate and support CNCS efforts to have a large and diverse portfolio of AmeriCorps programs despite the major budget cuts. Mr. Branen quoted the policy change he is concerned about as follows: “In order to maximize AmeriCorps resources and expand AmeriCorps service opportunities during these times of fiscal austerity, CNCS is seeking to increase the opportunities to serve by reducing overall costs per Member Service Year.” Mr. Branen stated that based on this new policy, CNCS has asked the new and re-competing programs to reduce their costs per MSY (Member Service Year) by five percent.

Mr. Branen said that this policy decision was based on an analysis performed by CNCS’s Office of Research and Evaluation. He further said that the NOFO (the Notice of Funding Opportunity announcing the grant competition) stated that programs with lower MSYs would be more competitive. Mr. Branen suggested, as an alternative, that commissions be given the portfolio flexibility to work with their programs, given that Commissions have the ability to move slots and funding within the Commissions’ competitive grants among competitive sub-grantees, thus maximizing the use of AmeriCorps resources and ensuring high quality programming and impact. Mr. Branen believed that his approach would work towards getting to the stated goal of reducing costs for MSYs.

Mr. Branen then listed the following concerns of the Commissions: 1) Commissions are concerned that CNCS is creating new policy to the clarification process rather than having an open public comment period, 2) CNCS is making requests and taking actions that are outside of what was published in the NOFO. The Commissions are grantors with their own responsibilities to conduct a fair and lawful grant application process using the known policies, regulations, and legal requirements for National Service programs. Implementation of changes in policies and criteria after the deadline for submission of applications could result in the appearance that applications were not correctly assessed by states as required by state law.

3) Commissions and their AmeriCorps programs are being put in an awkward spot to further reduce the cost per MSY, as they had already reduced MSY costs prior to submitting grant applications. In most cases, these programs have worked with their host sites and partners to secure matching funds and they have trimmed all the fat and the budgeting is set for the NOFO.

In conclusion, Mr. Branen requested that the Board and CNCS revisit the cost of MSY reductions and provide some flexibility to empower the Commissions’ programs to develop the right approach for these grant reductions. Mr. Branen invited CNCS to work with the Commissions on a comprehensive strategy to maximize AmeriCorps resources and expand the AmeriCorps service opportunities.

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Ms. Ward thanked Mr. Branen for his comments and stated that the Board took his comments seriously and the Board would follow-up with the appropriate CNCS staff.

**Closing Remarks**

There being no further presenters, Ms. Ward thanked the members of the Board, Wendy Spencer, the entire CNCS staff, and all of the partners in the room and those who joined by telephone. Ms. Ward stated that it was clear from the meeting today that the National Service programs are providing essential services and that there exists strong momentum for National Service. Ms. Ward adjourned the public meeting at 10:15 a.m.