



AMERICA'S
SERVICE
COMMISSIONS

The Intersection of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and State Service Commissions

Volunteer Maine Commission Meeting

February 19, 2021



Agenda

- Brief overview of ASC and the state service commission network
- DEI conversations across the state service commission network
- ASC engagement in DEI efforts
- Ideas for Consideration
- Q&A/Next Steps



What is America's Service Commissions (ASC)?

- National membership association of the 52 state and territorial service commissions
- Mission – **to lead and elevate the state service network**
- Work focuses on building commission capacity, advocacy to the AmeriCorps agency, and public policy efforts
- Twenty-five member Board of Directors consisting of state commission staff and commissioners from around the country
- Opportunities for **commissioner involvement**:
 - Annual ASC Leadership Convening
 - States for Service coalition
 - Quarterly commissioner webinars/networking



State Commissions Nationally

- State service commissions were established as a shared federal-state partnership, creating a central role for governors
- 52 state service commissions (49 states, District of Columbia, two territories)
- Most state service commissions are part of state government – 85%
- State service commissions administer **nearly 80%** of all AmeriCorps State and National funding
- Have a foundation/501(c)3 arm – 35%
- Receive state funding – 80%
- Are active in disaster preparedness and/or response activities – 62.5%
- Receive Volunteer Generation Fund grants – 22 in total



Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)

- For the purposes of our time together today, this is how I am defining each:
 - **Diversity** – a multiplicity of shared and different individual and group experiences, values, beliefs, and characteristics among people
 - **Equity** – the situation in which all people or groups are given access to the correct number and types of resources for them so as to achieve equal results; differs from equality, which focuses on the equal distribution of resources rather than equal results
 - **Inclusion** – words and actions designed to welcome diverse perspectives and individuals, allowing them to be be their “true selves” rather than expecting them to assimilate
- Our discussion today is not a training, but these definitions are meant to frame our discussion



Themes in Commission Approaches

- Commission staff training
- Commissioner training
- Training for AmeriCorps program staff and/or members
- Member recruitment
- Member support
- Grantmaking
- Language audits
- Incorporating inclusivity elements – pronoun usage, closed captioning of virtual trainings



PennSERVE

- As part of its 2018-2020 **State Service Plan**, PennSERVE included race and gender equity as well as inclusion as priorities for the plan
- Have provided **training to AmeriCorps program staff** regarding racial and gender equity as well as supporting diverse corps members during their terms of service
- As part of their most recent **Request for Proposals**, PennSERVE gave priority/special consideration to applicants that propose programming that seeks to engage and support a diverse corps of members and provide an equitable and inclusive service environment
- In 2020, commissioned a **Race and Equity Assessment** of commission policies and practices as well as those of programs – assessment included a series of recommendations that are now under consideration



Serve Washington
Changing Communities. Changing Lives.



Serve Washington

- Significant **staff training** on DEI through state government offerings as well as other training opportunities
- Serve Washington will be providing **formula grantees up to \$10,000** in additional funding to support DEI efforts within their program
- Serve Washington has partnered with **Schultz Family Foundation** to create the Washington COVID Response Corps
- Goal is to address food insecurity issues and provide meaningful service opportunities for 125 youth aged 17-25; recruitment targeted at **youth that reflect the communities in which they will serve**
- Members receive an **increased living allowance** (based on the region of the state in which they will serve) as well as additional training
- In addition, an **emergency fund** has been funded to assist members who face financial challenges that may prevent them from completing their term of service



Other Commission Strategies

- Hired consultant to **review NOFO for readability** and to make recommendations (Serve Wisconsin)
- Established a **DEI committee of the commission** (Volunteer Iowa)
- Providing the opportunity to apply for an **increased cost per MSY** for DEI related programming (Volunteer Iowa)
- Conducted a **survey of program practices** related to DEI (California Volunteers)
- Established, and are fundraising for, a **member emergency fund** (South Carolina Commission on National and Community Service)
- Exploring an **outreach strategy to BIPOC-led organizations** to build awareness about national service funding opportunities (Oregon Volunteers)



ASC Approach

- Began our journey in 2018 – hearing from commissions and programs about their interest in additional support around DEI
- Conducted a session with ASC Leadership Convening participants in 2019
- Extensive staff training in 2019 and 2020; ASC Board training to occur in 2021
- Developed a JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) plan in 2020 that is guiding our work
- Established a JEDI working group of interested commission staff members – launched earlier this year
- Facilitated two DEI cohorts for commissions who opted-in for the training
- Establishing commission staff affinity group for people of color
- Include staff pronouns in e-mail signatures and virtual trainings



ASC Approach

- Providing closed-captioning and transcription for all virtual training events
- Compiling a comprehensive list of barriers to DEI in AmeriCorps agency rules and regulations and well as grantmaking guidance – to be shared with the agency in the near future
- Will be conducting a session, “Grantmaking Through a DEI Lens”, as part of the 2021 ASC Leadership Convening (March 2-5)
- Prioritizing DEI-informed public policy priorities, including increasing the member living allowance
- Developing a language guide for the state service commission network to provide a basis for conversation amongst commission staff and other stakeholders
- Requiring that salary ranges are included in job postings on the ASC Job Board beginning in 2022



What Might You Do in Maine?

- Make a commitment to continue the conversation
- Have commissioners and commission staff complete foundational DEI training
- Talk with/survey program staff on their interests and needs in this area
- Consider providing DEI training for AmeriCorps program staff and/or members
- Identify easy steps related to increasing inclusivity
- Review Volunteer Maine outreach and grantmaking practices that may unintentionally limit applications (location, size of organization, etc.)
- Let ASC know how we can be of assistance
- Other?



Q&A/Discussion



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