



Governor's Commission on Service and Volunteerism
1700 W. Washington St, Suite 230
Wednesday, August 7, 2024, 1:30 PM

A general meeting of the Governor's Commission on Service and Volunteerism (GCSV)
 convened on **August 7, 2024**, notice duly given.

Members Present (09)	
Donna Davis, Chair	Felipe Garcia
Robert Ashcraft	Ariel Baber
Kylie Chamblee (proxy for Kimberly Rice)	Victoria (Tori) Carlson-Foscuz
Donna Martin	Carla Nuñez (Ex-Officio)
Thomas Winkel	
Members Absent (05)	
Michael Hammett	Helain Day
Alex Gabaldon	Tyler Butler
Chris Gibbs	
Staff and Guests (08)	
Emily Litchfield, Staff	Kainoa Spenser, Staff
Alana-Jasmene Little, Staff	KaRa Lyn Thrasher, Presenter
Grace Kuruvilla, Staff	Kerry Whitacre, Presenter
Jessica Deery, Staff	Jaime Brancato, NCCC Southwest Region Director

Call to Order

- **Donna Davis, Chair**, called the Governor's Commission on Service and Volunteerism meeting to order at **1:39 PM**. **Nine** members and **five** staff/guests were present.

Welcome/Introductions

- With the quorum met, **Donna Davis, Chair**, welcomed attendees, asked commissioners and the [Governor's Office of Youth, Faith and Family \(GOYFF\)](#) staff to introduce themselves, and conducted an icebreaker. Each person shared an experience from youth that led to their current involvement with or passion for service and volunteerism.

Approval of Minutes

- **Donna Davis, Chair**, requested a review of the **May 8, 2024** meeting minutes.
 - **Commissioner Ariel Baber** mentioned her name was misspelled and requested a revision.
 - **Commissioner Tori Carlson-Foscuz** mentioned her name was misspelled and requested a revision.
 - **Commissioner Robert Ashcraft** moved to accept the meeting minutes with amendments.
 - **Commissioner Donna Martin** seconded the motion.
- The motion passed with no dissenting votes at **1:58 PM**.

School Participatory Budgeting

- **Donna Davis, Chair**, introduced **KaRa Lyn Thrasher**, the [Center for the Future of Arizona \(CFA\)](#) Project Manager for Civic Health, to share information about the School Participatory Budgeting (SPB) program and how it empowers youth to solve essential issues.
- **KaRa Lyn Thrasher** shared that CFA's mission is to bring Arizonans together to build a brighter and stronger future. The SPB program allows students to decide how to spend dollars on school improvement while empowering youth to understand who they can be as leaders. Arizona was one of the first states to use SPB at [Bioscience High School](#) in 2013. CFA got involved in 2016, and [Phoenix Union School District](#) piloted its program. As of 2023, 70,000 students in 62 schools across ten districts in Arizona are participating in the program.

- **Ms. Thrasher** shared a short video to show what this looks like in the schools and then explained the process: students serve on a committee and oversee the various phases. Adults within the involved schools decide on the budget and set the process parameters. The committee of students asks the general student body what is needed or wanted to improve the community. The committee narrows down to approximately five choices that district leaders approve. Once approved, the committee sets a date for the student body to vote, and the winning project(s) receive funding. The SPB program process is crucial as it emphasizes and empowers youth service leadership and civic learning. Students can also earn a seal on their diploma upon graduating and acquire skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving. Schools can collaborate with voter registration organizations when students come to cast their votes, which can be helpful for high schools. Further involvement from the [Maricopa County Recorder's Office \(MCRO\) Junior Deputy Registrar Program](#) is also an option on voting day. This program enables students to assist in registering their peers to vote.
- **Ms. Thrasher** shared project examples from two different schools. At the first school, [Desert View High School](#), students noticed a need for a shade structure at bus stops. They also saw that it mainly impacted their Native American students, so they partnered with the Native American Club to create a shade structure. In 2022, [Roosevelt School District](#) became the first elementary school district to have full participation. On voting day, elementary students dressed and acted as poll workers to help younger peers cast their votes.
- **Commissioner Baber** inquired if any projects had involved students to help facilitate project implementation after going through the project process.
 - **Ms. Thrasher** responded that she was unsure, but many projects are infrastructure. In one case, students developed a video to tell other students how to use the installed play equipment.
- **Commissioner Martin** asked if there is an opportunity for charter schools to become involved.
 - **Ms. Thrasher** responded that it is open to anyone willing and able. Charter schools have expressed interest, but it has yet to start. If they are interested, they can reach out to her.
- **Commissioner Ashcraft** inquired how young people declare an interest in this.
 - **Ms. Thrasher** responded that it is different in each school district. A social studies classroom or an after-school club may lead it. It isn't always student government because those students are usually involved in other ways within the schools, but it could be.
- **Commissioner Ashcraft** commented that he wondered about those already volunteering in schools. Voting can be polarizing because of winners and losers. How is a compromise achieved instead of a simple yes or no?
 - **Ms. Thrasher** discussed the concentric circles involved: a small group is engaged the entire school year and may open it up to all who want to help. There are hundreds of ideas across the campus, and the steering committee has narrowed it down to five or so. Adults involved at the school may set other parameters at the beginning, such as the budget, which cuts many things, and students learn quickly. CFA provides a step-by-step guide. CFA encourages adult advisors to begin with empathy interviews so that students consider others, not just themselves. As a result, students become more at ease if the project doesn't reach completion and begin to think more about what could be helpful for them and others in the future.
- **Commissioner Garcia** inquired about the smallest student population the SPB program has engaged.
 - **Ms. Thrasher** responded that it may be 200-300 in an elementary setting.
- **Commissioner Garcia** asked how much time the SPB program takes.
 - **Ms. Thrasher** responded that it typically takes a full academic year, though she has seen it completed in a semester; this requires significant work, and the SPB process usually extends through March since schools submit finalized purchase orders by April.
- **Donna Davis, Chair**, asked if CFA is involved in rural schools.
 - **Ms. Thrasher** responded that it depends on your definition of "rural," but two high schools in Flagstaff are involved. Additionally, a teacher at Williams High School won a Teacher of the Year award last year and used some of that funding specifically with her seniors. She plans to do the same thing again with the student council this year.
- **Commissioner Carlson-Foscz** inquired as to whether CFA engages volunteers.
 - **Ms. Thrasher** responded that she didn't think they had, but the adult leader can be other school staff, not always a teacher. Volunteers have helped with the voting day, but proposal development would also be a good thing to consider.

- **Commissioner Carlson-Foscuz** suggested considering a partnership between [Public Allies](#) or another [AmeriCorps](#) program.
- To view **KaRa Lyn Thrasher's** presentation, [click here](#)

Deepening Youth Service in Arizona

- **Donna Davis, Chair**, introduced **Kerry Whitacre**, [BloomEd Group](#) CEO, to discuss surveying Arizona's current youth service and leadership opportunities as part of the Deepening Youth Service grant awarded to the GOYFF from [America's Service Commissions](#) and the [Mott Foundation](#).
- **Ms. Whitacre** began by stating the SPB program is a best practice. She added that today's information is a draft as she awaits results from the survey sent to youth; a final report will be available at the end of August 2024. Research-based studies on youth service and leadership found that only 23% of youth ages 16-24 participate in service and leadership opportunities. Studies also show that the benefits of participation in these youth opportunities are vast, such as workforce readiness, health well-being, sense of belonging, social responsibility, and more. One of the top seven values Arizonans want is to create a pipeline of civic leaders.
- **Ms. Whitacre** discussed the findings from her 56 interviews conducted between May and July 2024. Among those interviews were other state commissions and four Arizona-based AmeriCorps programs previously awarded, have built pathways and are eager to share best practices for replication. Highlights include:
 - Service learning, which focuses on service and leadership, is now part of the Career and Technical Education (CTE) curriculum at the [Arizona Department of Education \(ADE\)](#).
 - There are non-profits and faith-based organizations across Arizona working outside of school and some deeply in the community. Many, such as Girl Scouts of Southern Arizona, need help keeping youth involved once they reach high school. Many feel they do not have enough knowledge about youth civic and service engagement opportunities and don't know what other programs are doing.
 - Few programs knew about the civic leadership and service seal available to youth who serve in three approved in and out-of-school programs and engage in 30 hours of civic engagement.
 - Some Arizona youth opportunities include the Arizona Arts Commission (statewide), city/town youth council/commission/task forces, Arizona school/charter boards with a state advisory council, and some school districts and charter schools have youth on their boards.
 - The average size of 18 youth councils and commissions was 20 youths; the City of Mesa had 50 youths involved. Typically, the youth were high school students to provide more input regarding the government in the town they represented.
 - Many had a service component of at least 20 mandatory hours, such as supporting city/town events such as parades or festivals. Within the towns, they worked with the mayor, city council, parks and recreation, and sometimes job shadowing.
 - The organizations report engaging youth well and getting them to participate; they try to be flexible by meeting at various times.
 - Organizations are looking for innovation in government and are looking to these youths to leverage other youths to get more involved.
 - When asked about improvements, organizations responded mostly to structural issues such as needing to meet quorum, being subject to open meeting laws, and recruiting diversity.
 - Most wanted more opportunities to connect with other students outside the community to increase impact, such as improving access to scholarships, encouraging personal growth, sparking interest in municipal government, and providing youth with civic engagement opportunities and leadership skills.
 - Measuring success involves tracking service hours and participation, attendance at events, community feedback through surveys, former members' achievements and successes, the impact of projects, and social media interactions; many noted youth events got the most likes. Interviewed youth highlighted the importance of youth empowerment, expressed interest in expanding roles, and stressed the need to increase awareness of all programs.
 - Emphasized the importance of involving typically less engaged youth to increase inclusivity.
- **Ms. Whitacre** provided eight recommendations: 1) define terms such as "service," "leadership," and "youth" to set goals that continue the body of work; 2) build a statewide network co-designed by youth and staff to leverage all resources across the state; 3) reduce barriers to youth participation and increase youth-led opportunities; 4) increase

- access and awareness; 5) expand state resources; 6) link youth services and leadership to career readiness as a workforce development experience; 7) enhance quality and measurement; 8) promote local design and innovation.
- **Commissioner Ashcraft** inquired how youth was defined.
 - **Ms. Whitacre** responded with high school youth.
 - **Commissioner Ashcraft** inquired about the expectations of where the information would go and what the commission should do.
 - **Emily Litchfield**, the GOYFF AmeriCorps Director, responded that there has been a discussion regarding what it could look like in the future. It will be essential to bring in folks and look at it from a community level, keeping in mind that this will be coming from the Governor's office into the community and focusing on what rural communities want to see.
 - **Commissioner Garcia** asked about the average number of support staff for these organizations.
 - **Ms. Whitacre** responded that there was one at the most and that it typically wasn't their only job.
 - **Commissioner Carlson-Foscz** mentioned that a youth conference in Tucson, organized by young people, is focused on peace leadership and peacebuilding.
 - **Chair Davis** asked if Arizona has other statewide youth events.
 - **Ms. Whitacre** responded that there is a yearly League of Youth event. The Town of Florence is holding a youth conference for its council and has invited youth from all over to attend.
 - **Ms. Chamblee** responded another statewide event that happens every fall is the leadership conference for CTE.
 - To view **Kerry Whitacre's** presentation, [click here \(Part 1\)](#) or [here \(Part 2\)](#).

Updates

- **Jaime Brancato**, the National Civilian Community Corps (AmeriCorps NCCC) Deputy Regional Director, provided updates for the 2023-2024 program year. Seven Arizona projects involving six communities focused on recreation, fire maintenance, and disaster prevention. A new class will commence in November 2024 and conclude in July 2025. For the first quarter of the 2024 program period, the AmeriCorps NCCC received three applications to host a team, including submissions from Deadhorse Ranch State Park and Borderlands Restoration Network. Applications for the second-quarter programming are due by September 6, 2024.
- **Emily Litchfield**, the GOYFF AmeriCorps Director, shared that the commission's annual report is available on the GOYFF website. She noted that she is proud of the GOYFF AmeriCorps team and the subgrantees' work and thankful for the Commissioners' support. During the 2022-2023 program year, approximately 78,000 youth and children received resources and services across 32 Arizona AmeriCorps programs.
 - **Commissioner Martin** commented it is a very impressive annual report.
- **Carla Nuñez** provided AmeriCorps regional updates. She noted that the fiscal year is rapidly ending, and she is busy making awards, including the Governor's Office AmeriCorps Administrative funding. The RSVP Senior Program has a competition open now to address community priorities and gave examples such as tutoring and food banks. This application is due September 18, 2024. Three new VISTA grants have received funding awards in Arizona: [St. Joseph the Worker](#), [Ability Dogs of Arizona](#), and [University of Arizona Cooperative Extension](#).
- **Emily Litchfield**, the GOYFF AmeriCorps Director, invited commissioners to the new program orientation scheduled for August 15, 2024, to introduce themselves to the latest and returning programs.

Business

- Due to time constraints, **Donna Davis, Chair**, announced that members will revisit the discussion of ensuring students know about the service learning and leadership seal available from the ADE.
- **Commissioner Garcia** shared ideas for refreshing the commission logo to improve it for everyone. He noted that social media is needed to promote service to Arizona youth, and due to its shape, the current logo could be more user-friendly on social media. **Commissioner Garcia** recommended a circular design that is social media friendly and would work well with the Governor's Youth Commission (GYC) and the GOYFF logo. He also noted the importance of keeping the heart and the flag before sharing several designs with the commission.
 - **Commissioner Ashfield** commented that he loved the idea and saw the importance of it working well with social media. He also recommended keeping some of the design's cultural heritage.
 - **Donna Davis, Chair**, stated that she appreciates that the proposed designs keep some of the traditional elements we already have.

- **Commissioner Martin** noted her appreciation and thanked **Commissioner Garcia** for his proposed designs.
- **Emily Litchfield**, the GOYFF AmeriCorps Director, shared her appreciation for the enthusiasm and noted there will be an internal discussion.

Future Meeting Dates

- **Emily Litchfield**, the GOYFF AmeriCorps Director, stated that the next meeting will occur on **October 2, 2024**, at **1:30 PM**.

Adjourn

- The meeting adjourned at **3:35 PM**.

Dated the 9th day of August 2024
Governor's Commission on Service and Volunteerism
Respectfully Submitted By:
Jessica Deery
GOYFF AmeriCorps Program Administrator

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