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Public Relations Committee Meeting

June 2, 2021

4:00 p.m. - 5:40 p.m.

Locations

Virtual Meeting via Webex

Virtual Meeting Credentials:

Provided in Meeting Invitation or contact Claire Starling to get a link

claire.starling@illinois.gov

Commissioners Present: Leonis, Catherine; Hayman, Bridget

Staff Present: Samuels, Ayoka; McNeill, Cassie; Starling, Claire

Serve Illinois Foundation: Leonis, Catherine; Trivedi, Shefali

Guest Present: Gruber, Curt

Minutes

1. Call to Order
 - a. Cathy called the meeting to order at 4:06 p.m.
2. Roll Call
 - a. Attendance and minutes recorded by Cassie McNeill.
3. Digital Updates by Cassie McNeill
 - a. Cassie (with the assistance of Claire) has been working on website development and all things social media alongside PGM. We have been working on the website since April 26th, including looking specifically at written content with a complete website audit. Our goal is to have the updates completed by the end of this summer.
 - I. The website before had a lot of information that was overloaded and often outdated. Logos have been updated, specifically the AmeriCorps logo, pages with important links have been updated, and the information included made clearer to help specifically draw in volunteers. AmeriCorps statistics have also been updated. We are also collaborating with outside blogs to feature additional information on the website.

- II. Cassie has also been working on the Serve IL social media platforms as well. Our accounts are currently being used to share information from sister organizations. We are working on improving engagement and retention. Since February, we have improved our overall audience and the diversity of that audience as well. We are looking to include more information and engagement from board members and award winners from our recognition events like the Governor’s Hometown Awards. We are looking to also roll out an AmeriCorps recruitment campaign with a timeline of July-September 2021.
- III. We also posted a press release from the Governor’s Hometown Awards and received a huge response from individuals and local newspapers from across Illinois. Coming up, we are including an AmeriCorps Awards announcement and are looking to promote the Governor’s Volunteer Service Awards in October.
- IV. Cassie also created a Board of Commissioner’s onboarding deck to help orient new commissioners to the Serve Illinois board. Bridget asked if she was thinking through any ideas in terms of website accessibility and where there could be improvements. This can also be considered with our social media platforms as well. Cassie will be setting up a time to work together with Bridget soon to work through these steps to better accessibility on the Serve Illinois website.

4. Recap Marketing and Brand Strategy

- a. Curt presented- PGM has been working with Serve Illinois to tighten up aspects with our branding and marketing.
 - i. PGM Engagement: Brand Strategy, working toward understanding who Serve Illinois Commission is including one on one interviews.
 - ii. Phase 1- Brand Strategy
 - iii. Research- Changed a bit over time, posed asked “Why do people volunteer?” Conclusion the issue was not geographical. The research was with individuals, the question posed “What do you know about Serve Illinois?”
 - 1. What was discovered is that the core of people who should know Serve Illinois, the awareness was still low. On a national level there was still a lack of understanding of what the organization does. There was an overriding trend that Serve Illinois was a government entity with no reciprocity. The hypothesis of wanting to be the hub of volunteerism is not what the Serve Illinois Commission is being seen as.
 - 2. Findings showed that it was clear that the segmentation of opportunities Serve struggled in. Each community in Illinois has their own needs and thus segmenting might be very difficult and not the best way to go. Serve Illinois can rebuild respect. The idea is that Serve Illinois has not gotten their hands dirty and rolled up

their sleeves instead Serve has been seen as only showing up for the “cameras and microphone”.

3. One of the aspects Curt recognized is that each organization large or small is interested in their own issues, which can make Serve seem like they don't necessarily care on their scale. The use of language, how do we talk about everyone who has needs that are truly important to their community? The use of language is inclusive and very important. Lastly, the collective connection to helping or volunteering has become politicized. We need to tap into our personal feelings to motivate a new generation.
4. Recommendations, the sentiment is that Serve has lost its touch, a suggestion to combat that is an Ayoka speaking tour. Does not necessarily need to be Ayoka on the speaking tour, it could be commissioners. Serve could utilize the (possible) opening of Illinois next week to connect again.
5. Curt posed a question: how we can recreate a mechanism where people are comfortable having a discussion on constructive criticism for Serve Illinois. Ayoka explains we can provide technical assistance, engage different agencies that can help with writing applications. Serve Illinois can facilitate this agency ambassador opportunities. Catherine offers input, so we could open it up for a listserv. Bridget chimes in, would it be well to say we could be the champion for the non-profits on a national stage, how can we be the convener that directs people to the national stage. It could help move us away from just being the funder, it could be effective. Our job is to help elevate; it doesn't change the actual role of Serve but it does change how people perceive us.
 - a. Shefali added, what comes across to me is that Serve Illinois is just a part of AmeriCorps, what does Serve bring outside of AmeriCorps. What value does Serve Illinois bring to the infrastructure support of volunteerism of the state? As an agency she can attest to the notion that the bigger national agencies really benefit from the AmeriCorps program. Can we develop a one pager that outlines the cost of being a part of the AmeriCorps program and when do we apply? These are important aspects that higher ups need to know before moving forward.
 - b. Bridget chiming in, it would be interesting to take the top 10 questions based on pain points that could be answered in the one pager. It would also be interesting to deep dive

into what are the things that we have heard about and not heard about. We should look at changing “citizen” to “illinoisians”, question where are we in the process of rebranding? It is about localizing the ideas and making it something more approachable.

- c. There is an organization that employs but cannot do it on their own, are we in a place to look at other non-profits that have the bandwidth to take on that task? -Ayoka
- d. It has to be more than solving a marketing position, but it has to be true. – Shefali
- e. We must be honest while also working strategically on marketing efforts. It may be good for us to have more round tables where people can be more honest about their feelings. -Ayoka
- f. Serve just needs to show up and not when there is a microphone, and it gives more materials for Cassie. -Curt
- g. There are a lot of people looking for grant money, I wonder if we can offer a “how to”? – Bridget
- h. I think that is a great good will gesture and we have been talking about doing that and maybe we could utilize some points on social media. – Cathy
- i. Is there a way to share other grant applications as resources? – Shefali
- j. Even if it was a library to give people a sense and even have a webinar that utilizes the resources. – Bridget
- k. If the information could be public with redacted financial information. - Curt

iv. Vision Statement

- 1. How would you like to handle and move through mission and vision? -Curt
- 2. I think everyone has seen this maybe we can take a stab at it with other commissions – Ayoka

3. If we have feedback Cathy is okay if we just send it to you, I have some thoughts on inclusive language? – Bridget
4. Yes! – Cathy
5. We need to put something together for the retreat - Ayoka (Bridget to CC and reach out to Ayoka.)
6. We can still provide feedback on the vision and mission statement – Shefali
7. Of course, we know this is going to take rounds! - Curt

v. Goal Formulation

1. How do we put our goals into action?
 - a. SMART Goal
2. Internal Goal Formulation
 - a. We should get the AmeriCorps to work on it?
 - b. There needs to be a focus on collaboration there needs to be a goal on agencies as well – Shefali
 - c. There are aspects that we are still working on, there are three different areas that must have their own goals. Each of these goals have their own logic models, the problem is that we do not have the staff. For the record it is not all about AmeriCorps. – Ayoka
 - d. These are my goals, we looked at low hanging fruit, how do we quantify? – Curt
 - e. When we look at the Allstate Foundation, they tout about their work with organizations but when has Serve worked with them? Not only do we have the opportunity for Ayokas newness we also have commissioners in the fold, if serve Illinois ask all the commissioners to go out there and show that action. – Curt
 - f. We have talked about doing some strategic relationship work, part of the issue is the foundation job, but the foundation has been working to keep their head above water. - Curt

- Next Steps
 - Commissioners look at the goal formulation page and send it comments and suggestions.

- Commissioners look at vision and mission and send feedback to Claire Starling and Cassie McNeill.
- Send information through Basecamp.
- Cathy sending Brand Strategy deck to everyone in the committee.
- Cassie to reach out to Bridget about website accessibility and next steps.
- Adjournment
 - Catherine adjourned the meeting at 5:40 pm