

CAAP BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

CEO REPORT ON CAAP ACTIVITIES

FOR THE PERIOD

JANUARY 15, 2020 – APRIL 28, 2020

1) KEY FOCUS AREAS

a) Coronavirus

This is our current focus. Most of our time has been committed to the response and we expect that will continue with the response and stimulus activities.

We attend several meetings a week, telephonically or web, with state agencies and national partners, to stay informed of any new information that may be shared with our PA CAAs. Emails are sent daily to PA CAAs, though we keep it to the minimal amount possible to limit email inundation for the agencies. Our CAAP website has been updated with a Coronavirus section that includes both a Resource page, with links to other state and national partner sites with guidance, and an update page with newer information as it comes in.

We set up a weekly Monday morning for PA CAAs to share concerns and needs, and to ask questions; the call includes DCED. We also include our non-member agency, Delaware County, in all emails and calls as we believe We Are All In This Together. The meetings are well attended and participation is excellent which allows for good communication between the agencies themselves and with DCED in seeking solutions to barriers and providing opportunities. CAAP developed a matrix of agency status as a companion piece to this meeting, noting the programs/offices/services at each agency which are open, open but not to the public, or closed, and whether staff is working remotely from home. The form also allows for guidance to be requested and note client needs that are being identified.

Contact with DCED has increased as we work jointly to seek answers and solutions to agency questions and concerns as well as following the Supplemental CSBG Funding provided for Community Action in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. We have consulted with CAPLAW several times regarding legal interpretations of the CARES Act, including the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), for information and interpretation that can assist our agencies.

b) LensCAAP

LensCAAP had produced a number of excellent videos and had nothing but satisfied clients. However, it just doesn't appear as though the market is there. LensCAAP recently sent out an invitation to virtually all the non-profits in the surrounding counties, over 300 in all, to attend LensCAAP's anniversary celebration. The planned celebration included a wine and cheese drop in on a Friday afternoon from 2 – 4 with a brief introduction to LensCAAP, and a raffle to win a free video. LensCAAP didn't receive a single acceptance.

It has attempted every marketing endeavor it can think off from emailing every CAA in PA, utilizing social media, advertising in national partners' programs, having satisfied clients in other states promote the company. Most of LensCAAP business has come from outside Pennsylvania. Many of PA's CAAs have said they are interested in response to emails and in personal conversations, but say they are not yet ready to do a video but they will get around to it.

It has also been pointed out that smart phones are now able to take high quality videos; and while they are not the caliber of a LensCAAP production, they do an acceptable job at no cost for the never-wealthy non-profit.

LensCAAP expended the money invested by the CAAP board in the startup. CAAP did not charge LensCAAP for its full overhead – Susan and the finance manager's salaries, premises and utility costs – in an attempt to further support LensCAAP until it could get on its feet. But going forward, it would have cost about \$20,000 per month to keep LensCAAP operational; and without the prospect of solid business opportunities, it was unreasonable to ask CAAP to invest more money.

On March 10, a joint telephonic meeting was held between CAAP Social Enterprises Holdings, Inc. and CAAP, the sole investor in CAAP Social Enterprises Holding, Inc., to discuss the future of LensCAAP, the social enterprise video company started and housed under CAAP Social Enterprises Holding, Inc. (CSEH).

The members discussed the situation at length asking questions regarding how LensCAAP staff would be handled. Susan explained that staff would work on site for the coming two weeks closing down the

operation, selling equipment and finishing any video edits still remaining. Then they would each be given two weeks' severance pay, including cashing in any earned vacation time.

Following the discussion, Darlene Bigler moved that LensCAAP should close down effective March 27th and staff terminated on that date with two weeks' severance pay, including cashing in any earned vacation time. Rick Beaton seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

2) COMMUNICATIONS

Newsletters

From December through March we had resumed our issuance of the monthly *CAAP Update* and *Advocacy* newsletters. Given the amount of email during the pandemic, we recognized that we are sending out critical information on a daily basis and do not need to add to the inundation with these two newsletters. They will resume when appropriate.

Social Media

There is so much information out there, we do not want to load on to it. We will resume their use when appropriate.

Website

Again, we added a Coronavirus section.

The rest of the website will continue to be monitored and updated as time allows.

Conference/meetings

2020 Community Action Symposium

Of note, we had all speakers in place, were set for finishing the Symposium logistics in a timely manner, and had a good response number on our online registration. However, due to the advent of COVID19, we have cancelled the event. The hotel was very cooperative in recognizing our situation and released us from the contract without penalty. All but one speaker did the same. The Magic of Oz (Pearlman), Inc., is holding our \$6,000 deposit for some future booking despite our *Force Majeure* argument that this is an unprecedented world event in our lifetime.

2020 October Conference

I predict that going forward, at least for the next year or so, large gatherings will not be a smart idea. There is every likelihood that the virus, even once it diminishes, will flare up again in the fall and winter months. With the goal of keeping our members safe and well, I suggest that CAAP cancel its October conference. Instead, I would like to create a program of monthly webinars for 4 different staffing groups, one each week of the month i.e. Week one webinars would focus on fiscal staff; Week 2 would focus on programmatic staff; Week 3 would address leadership; and Week 4 could focus on HR. This would allow us to provide the same and more training that would be provided at our conference. We, of course, would not start this until the state is open and back to work and our agencies have arrived at a new normal way of doing business.

I am not sure yet how we would do the SSA awards. Perhaps we would have to omit the large gathering ceremony but present each winner with the award through video conferencing.

3) VISTA PROGRAM

This report covers the second quarter of VISTA service for current VISTA members who started service in July and August of 2019. As a result of the “stay home order” all VISTAs at this time are tele serving from their homes. A summary of their progress during this quarter is listed below:

CAAP: Communications and Marketing Associate VISTA Carolina Nicholson is working on the third and final year of the Toolkit project. At the time of this reporting, 10 toolkits have been completed and have been sent to the appropriate agency for review and feedback.

Provided in each toolkit are Word Document versions of each file. If the data changes a year after the Toolkits have been sent out, each agency can update that information in the Word Document and continue to use the toolkit for as long as possible. Each agency will be able to make their own annual updates.

There is also a training document included, which explains what each type of file is and how it can be used. (For example, a PNG file is better for social media because it is an image. But a PDF file is better for printing. And so on).

At this time, it is not certain if any in-person trainings will even be feasible by the end of the project. However, Carolina is doing her best to make the training document really thorough for the agencies.

CAPLANC: Community Action Partnership of Lancaster County has three projects as follows:

Coalition Coordination: As events or initiatives are started and completed, the Coalition Coordinator VISTA Chelsey Tennis is creating sustainability documents which outline important information around the logistics of the event or initiatives, including contact information, planning and implementation strategies and timelines, and specific outcomes or action items that need to happen for the event. Also, before taking on any new recurring projects, the Coalition Coordinator talks with the Action Chair Teams or Coalition Chair to talk about what will happen to the project and who will lead it after the term of service is done. The Coalition Coordinator is also working on building an internal policy document to help institutionalize processes around leadership changes and accountability to ensure that after the VISTA project is completed that the Coalition to Combat Poverty has a system of policy to help any new staff continue to operate smoothly.

Lancaster Equity: To ensure the sustainability of the projects that the Lancaster Equity Coordinator VISTA Patrick Monahan is currently creating a collection of documents and a list of contacts to guide the incoming AmeriCorps VISTA with all the information necessary to keep these projects moving forward. The project with utmost importance is the Beaver Street Park project located on the 300 Block of Beaver Street in the southern half of the City of Lancaster. After the transition of new directors on the Lancaster Equity Board, the president, Mike McKenna has made the decision to put forth all necessary efforts to get the Beaver Street Park open to the residents by the end of 2020. As Patrick feels passionate in this goal, he will do everything within his ability to allow this project to reach the finish line. If the park still requires continual efforts by the end of his year of service, he will make sure that the next AmeriCorps VISTA will have access to all information and an understanding of this project along with any new goals that have developed from this point until the end of his year of service.

Block CAPtains: This program exists to provide concerned community members with the experience, resources, and connections to have a lasting positive impact on their community. Joe Sorkin is currently working with Block CAPtains and the community at large to help the program ultimately become independently organized. The food pantry project for example would be adopted by the West Lancaster Jewels neighborhood group for restocking and maintenance once it has been built. Also, the Beaver Street park project is intended to bring a long-term, uplifting landmark to a traditionally neglected area of the city and will be home to recreation and community programming for years to come. The Neighbor to Neighbor Forum is another event currently run by CAP but intended to be passed on to the residents

of Lancaster in the future. Joe is heavily involved the community and the Block Captains to bring these plans to fruition.

Union Snyder: Food security Coordinator VISTA Nicole Peterson has gone above and beyond to streamline operations and expand capacity to serve people living with food insecurity in Union and Snyder counties. In November, she helped organize a significant food drive in partnership with a local radio station; over the course of a week, a DJ from the station camped in an RV outside of the local mall and encouraged people to come by to drop off nonperishable food for the holidays. By the end of the week, the large trailer was filled with food donations that were then transported back to the CAA and organized by Nicole and staff. The food has been steadily distributed to customers who come into the CAA with an urgent need for food.

Nicole is also in the process of developing “emergency food bags”, which are enough prepared bags of nonperishable food for 3 days that staff can quickly grab from the pantry when they have a customer in need, or they are on their way to a home visit. This will increase the amount of food distributed by the service staff and ensure that customers are getting enough food to feed their families for a specified period of time.

Tri-County Community Action: Farmers Market Coordinator VISTA: Isabel Blumenthal visited area farmers markets to meet vendors and other market managers to see best practices. She developed market rules & regulations document; a vendor interest survey, location map, and profile of the community that have all been included in a vendor packet as well as recruiting 7 interested vendors. She also met with a student to create market logo and is working with internal staff to develop a logo in next quarter.

She began drafting a business plan and set up a meeting with the local SCORE office for general assistance and a focus on financial projections for the market. She researched the process to become a SNAP retailer and began the application process.

She created agendas, facilitated, and completed notes for 2 farmers market steering committee meetings; and, she worked with internal staff and insurance company to determine agency insurance needs for the market.

Holy Family: Literacy Coordination: Through the efforts of VISTA Keilah Gussie, 6 out of 10 students in the program have improved reading fluency which has brought them much closer to grade level.

FOTP (Friends of the Poor): The Volunteer Coordinator VISTA Shayna Canty, has been recruiting and scheduling volunteers for the upcoming community dinners and food giveaways. These dinners feed thousands of residents in the Scranton community and require huge volunteer coordination efforts. Due to the “stay at Home” order the Easter Basket give away was changed to a “drive by” pick up which reduced the number of volunteers needed. Even though Shayna is working from home she is still working on coordinating volunteers for the next event once the “stay at home” band has been lifted. The second Program Evaluation VISTA, Dane Fallon, reports to FOTP’s largest service site, Jackson Terrace, three days a week and the administrative office two days a week. At the service site, he observes the function of the pantry and works to make improvements for the current system of capturing results and impact. He also works on the largest item on his VAD, which is to make a resource guide of all available services in the county.

MLK Day of Service: All VISTAs successfully completed a day of service projects. The final mandatory day of service which was scheduled during AmeriCorps week in March was cancelled due to the Covid19 social distancing guidelines.

VISTA/Supervisor conference calls are held monthly and bi-weekly chats with each VISTA are held. A monthly VISTA Only video conference call is scheduled once a month. This was put in place to help the VISTAs with the isolation caused by the stay at home order.

4. OTHER:

Regional Performance & Innovation Consortium (RPIC) Grant

In the midst of this, OCS has continued to request that Region 3 (as well as all regions) to submit a Noncompetitive Continuing Contract application. CAAP completed a questionnaire the Region 3 Lead Agency, the Maryland Community Action Partnership, regarding significant activities and plans for the current contract year. CAAP, like the other states, noted the disruption caused by the coronavirus which is throwing off planned activities.

ROMA

All activities are currently suspended. The Association of Nationally Certified ROMA Trainers was hoping to send out a survey about needs and interests in ROMA implementation to Region 3 agencies, but on Dan's recommendation, that request will not be made until we can discern that agencies are back on track.

CSBG DATA Task Force

OCS had not been responsive on documents the task force had submitted for review and approval during the latter part of 2019. The task force activities have been suspended until such time they may be resumed with OCS's participation.

DCED Services Contract

Like every agency, we received notice from DCED that payments should be underway shortly. DCED continues to work extremely cooperatively with us on the needs of the network.

CAAP Community Needs Assessment Tool

A few agencies have requested updated memberships. We have received an invoice from the University of Missouri CARES act for this year's maintenance, a decrease to \$10,000. We will email out invoices to each agency next month (allowing time between the NCAF invoices and these).

Emergency Management Poverty Simulations

These events with the Department of Human Services have been suspended.

Work Ready

We contacted DHS several times in order to get any guidance on the program during the pandemic. In the end, DHS stopped County Assistance Offices from referring clients to all Education and Training programs, including Work Ready. DHS explained that "continuing program referrals, would cause undue hardship on brand new participants (who would not receive special allowances or childcare), our CAOs (who are already overwrought with work), and create the potential for a loss of participants once we return to programming because they do not have the supports in place to transition them into brick and

mortar facilities. To that end, this was not done to slight Work Ready programs. Instead it was done to align ourselves with the Governor's initiatives and keeping Pennsylvanians safe.”

Community Action Toolkits

CAAP’s VISTA, Carolina Nicholson, is steadily working on editing the toolkit project so that each agency will receive a toolkit customized with their information. As of mid-April, we have 9 toolkits completed. This is on track for completing all toolkits in August.