



**AmeriCorps VISTA
Summer Associates Guidance for Staff**

**Fiscal Year 2015
May 3, 2015 – August 31, 2015**

Corporation for
**NATIONAL &
COMMUNITY
SERVICE** 

TABLE OF CONTENTS

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR	3
PROGRAMMING	4
RECRUITMENT	4
CITIZENSHIP VERIFICATION	4
TIMING OF PLACEMENTS	5
LEAVE POLICY	5
PROCESS FOR SUMMER ASSOCIATES BECOMING FULL-TIME VISTAS	5
SUMMER ASSOCIATES COMPLETING SERVICE AS SCHEDULED	6
SUMMER ASSOCIATES EARLY TERMINATING (COMPELLING PERSONAL REASONS)	6
2015 SUMMER ASSOCIATE PAYMENT CALCULATOR*	7

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Colleagues,

Few federal programs can claim the legacy and impact that have become the hallmarks of AmeriCorps VISTA. Our members have willingly served in some of the most economically depressed areas of the country. VISTAs have created support networks and built the capacity of nonprofits already engaged in our shared mission: eliminating the poverty that obscured the inherent potential and dignity of all people. That critical mission often guided our members beyond their formal term of service and set the course of their entire professional career and beyond.

As we enter our 50th anniversary year and in the spirit of a “VISTA Homecoming,” our Summer Associate program is another invaluable opportunity for alumni to serve. While there is no expectation that every state will host a summer program, we encourage SPDs to strongly consider providing this avenue for alumni to return and serve alongside a new generation of VISTA members. Successful programs will provide a meaningful outlet for alumni to participate and mentor those serving for the first time. An ancillary benefit would be to generate positive human interest stories in local and regional media outlets where these intergenerational summer programs operate.

We look forward to working with you to maximize our Summer Associate program.



Paul Monteiro

PROGRAMMING

In FY 2015, VISTA Summer Associate projects should focus primarily on the following areas:

- Programming to add or support meal sites that serve both youth and elders (intergenerational congregate meal sites), including USDA Summer Food Service Programs and senior meal programs. USDA has listed the following as their target states: Alabama, Arizona, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Texas, and West Virginia.
- Programming to enhance existing STEM projects or add summer STEM components to other education projects.
- Programming to prevent summer learning loss for students who attend Title 1 eligible schools and/or Department of Education's School Improvement Grants schools.

Only current sponsors are eligible to participate in the Summer Associate program. A Memorandum of Agreement with a new organization must be in place by April 1, 2015, for the organization to be considered a current sponsor. Since Tribal Communities experience high poverty rates and are in dire need of programming in the above focus areas, VISTA encourages 2015 Summer Associate Projects from current sponsors that are tribal organizations and current sponsors serving or planning to serve tribal communities.

Please refer to the [VISTA Desk Reference, Chapter 9](#), for additional information on Summer Associate procedures.

Important note: If you have sponsors willing to cost share additional Summer Associate positions, do not exceed your allocations without first checking with [Paul Davis](#) or [Craig Kinnear](#) as we cannot exceed our education award slot allocation.

RECRUITMENT

As with previous guidance, we encourage sponsors to give priority to disadvantaged youth between the ages of 18 and 24 in the selection of their Summer Associates. Additionally VISTA will reach out to alumni, offering them the opportunity to serve again as Summer Associates as part of the 50th Anniversary and providing them information on how to apply. While VISTA will be tracking the enrollment of former VISTAs, State Offices will be asked to provide additional information about those individuals for use in promotional materials.

CITIZENSHIP VERIFICATION

Similar to full time, regular VISTA members, a Summer Associate candidate's Social Security and Citizenship status must have a "Verified" status by the Social Security Administration (SSA) prior to the candidate's placement. If the Status is "Returned", additional documentation must be submitted to the [National Service Hotline](#) by the candidate prior to activation to verify service eligibility. VISTA members and Summer Associates cannot be activated without their Social Security and Citizenship status being verified (electronically or manually) by the SSA. Failure to verify a candidate's status prior to the candidate's scheduled start date will cause the Summer Associate's living allowance to be delayed, and could potentially jeopardize the Summer Associate's ability to serve. For additional guidance, please

reference [Memorandum 12-004: Revision – Eligibility Requirements for AmeriCorps VISTA Documentation of U.S. Citizenship/Legal Residency.](#)

TIMING OF PLACEMENTS

Summer Associate programs operate for either 8 weeks (56 days) or 10 weeks (70 days). Associate programs begin no earlier than **May 3** and end no later than **August 31** of the same year. The last day Summer Associates may be placed is **June 22, 2015**.

Candidates will need to be placed on a Summer (SUM) event type in order to be tracked and activated on time. CNCS State Offices are encouraged whenever possible to place Summer Associates toward the start of a pay period. This will allow adequate time to activate the Summer Associates so they receive their first living allowance payment on their first pay date. It is important to note that if your candidate is not placed to the appropriate event by the deadline noted in chart below, the candidate will need to be placed on the event for the next pay period. Please use the event codes listed in the chart at the end of the guidance for the event the candidate's start date falls under. For additional guidance on placement procedures, please reference the VMSU's [State Office Process Guide](#).

If Summer Associates begin their service toward the end of a pay period, **they should expect their first living allowance payment the second pay date after they begin**. Use the chart at the end of this guidance to plan start dates for Summer Associates, and to manage expectations around when the first living allowance payment will be received. Please provide your sponsors with the chart as well.

LEAVE POLICY

While the full policy regarding leave for Summer Associates is contained in [Chapter 9](#) of the VISTA Desk Reference, the highlights are as follows:

- Summer Associates receive leave on holidays observed by their sponsor.
- If a Summer Associate has an emergency or illness that prevents service, sponsor may provide 1-2 days of leave that must be made up by serving extra hours or days prior to the Summer Associate's expected completion date.
- State Offices may allow up to five additional days of emergency leave.

PROCESS FOR SUMMER ASSOCIATES BECOMING FULL-TIME VISTAS

VISTA Summer Associates frequently enroll as VISTA members. These Associates, before becoming a VISTA, must close their service either as scheduled or early for the compelling personal reason of joining the full-year VISTA program. In either case, the person must attend PSO; training deferment for more than two weeks is not an option.

Several steps, described on the next page, must be taken to ensure a smooth transition from Summer Associate to VISTA member.

SUMMER ASSOCIATES COMPLETING SERVICE AS SCHEDULED

The Associate indicates his/her desire to serve as a full-time VISTA member. If the Associate's **service ends in time to be enrolled in a summer PSO**, then take the following steps:

1. The Associate must apply following regular procedures.
2. CSO approves the application of a Summer Associate to become a VISTA member.
3. CSO enrolls Associate in a PSO by the 35-day deadline.
4. Summer Associate fills out a Travel Request Profile (Travel to Training, and Relocation if applicable) and all other applicable enter on duty forms.
5. At the end of the Summer Associate term, s/he completes Part A of the Future Plans Form (FPF), selecting the **Complete my service as scheduled** option.
6. Sponsor completes Part B of FPF selecting the **Termination/Close of Service** option.
7. CSO completes Part C of FPF selecting the **Regular Exit** option, and indicates in the Comments section that the Associate is to become a VISTA member.
8. VMSU exits the Associate based on the FPF.
9. Associate, now a candidate, attends PSO.

SUMMER ASSOCIATES EARLY TERMINATING (COMPELLING PERSONAL REASONS)

The Associate indicates his/her desire to serve as a VISTA member. If the Associate's **service will not end in time to be enrolled in a summer PSO**, then take the following steps:

1. The Associate must request early termination for compelling personal circumstances, i.e., to enter into VISTA member service.
2. CSO approves the request following regular procedures. The Associate is eligible for a prorated EOS benefit.
3. The Associate must also apply following regular procedures.
4. CSO enrolls Associate in a PSO by the 35-day deadline.
5. Summer Associate fills out a Travel Request Profile (Travel to Training, and Relocation if applicable) and all other applicable enter on duty forms.
6. In closing his/her service early, s/he completes Part A of the Future Plans Form (FPF), selecting the **"Terminate My Service Early"** option.
7. Sponsor completes Part B of FPF selecting the **Termination/Close of Service** option.
8. CSO completes Part C of FPF selecting the **"Early Termination"** option, and indicates in the Comments section that the Associate is to become a VISTA member.
9. VMSU exits the Associate based on the FPF.
10. Associate, now a candidate, attends PSO.



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2015 SUMMER ASSOCIATE FIRST LIVING ALLOWANCE PAYMENT CALCULATOR*

Pay Period	Event Code	Event Assignment and Electronic Documents Received at VMSU by COB	First Living Allowance Payment Received
201511 (05/03/2015-05/16/2015)	SUM-05/03/2015-Austin-TX	05/11/2015	05/22/2015
201512 (05/17/2015-05/30/2015)	SUM-05/17/2015-Austin-TX	05/25/2015	06/05/2015
201513 (05/31/2015-06/13/2015)	SUM-05/31/2015-Austin-TX	06/08/2015	06/19/2015
201514 (06/14/2015-06/27/2015)	SUM-06/14/2015-Austin-TX	06/22/2015	07/03/2015

*All Summer Associates must be placed by June 22.