*VISTA … Celebrating 50 Years of Service*

# SUPERVISOR ORIENTATION

**Fall 2015**

AMERICORPS VISTA 50 years

JBS INTERNATIONAL

education northwest

Bankstreet College of Education

Dear VISTA Supervisor:

On behalf of the AmeriCorps VISTA program, I welcome you to the Corporation for National and Community Service, to AmeriCorps VISTA, and to your Supervisor Orientation.

I am continually inspired by the fresh spirit of service and idealism common to those who join VISTA and to the organizations that sponsor VISTA projects. VISTAs are agents of change in low-income communities who bring perhaps the most important resource to organizations and communities: motivated, capable people. I want to thank you for the valuable contributions you will make to the renewal of America.

The VISTA Supervisor Orientation introduces you to VISTA, our mission, history, and policies, and to your roles and responsibilities as a VISTA sponsor and supervisor. It also connects you to a network of other VISTA supervisors who can serve as a valuable resource to you.

Best wishes for an amazing VISTA project.

Sincerely,

Paul Monteiro
Director, AmeriCorps VISTA

## Acknowledgments

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# Mission & Supervisor Orientation Goals

## Corporation for National & Community Service Mission Statement

The Corporation's mission is to provide opportunities for Americans of all ages and backgrounds to engage in service that addresses the nation's educational, public safety, environmental, and other human needs to achieve direct and demonstrable results and to encourage all Americans to engage in such service. In doing so, the Corporation will foster civic responsibility, strengthen the ties that bind us together as a people, and provide educational opportunity for those who make a substantial commitment to service.

## VISTA Mission & Legacy

VISTA builds capacity in nonprofit organizations and communities to help bring individuals and communities out of poverty. For over 50 years, VISTA has been helping bring communities and individuals out of poverty. Today, nearly 6,000 VISTA members serve in hundreds of nonprofit organizations and public agencies throughout the country—working to promote literacy, improve health services, create businesses, increase housing opportunities, and bridge the digital divide.

## Goals of VISTA Supervisor Orientation

*By the end of the Supervisor Orientation, supervisors will be able to:*

- Describe the VISTA program and its mission in broad terms
- Gain a better understanding of their role as VISTA Supervisors
- Share learnings with sub-site supervisors so that they are able to support their VISTAs to the best of their ability
- Support VISTAs in their role as capacity builders within their sponsoring organizations
- Articulate how their VISTA project fits in the context of the National Service network
- Locate key resources and contacts within VISTA to facilitate successful reporting and communication between the sponsoring organization and the State Office
- Define and develop a clear, realistic VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)
- Identify the diverse characteristics of the VISTA population
- Effectively recruit, interview and screen VISTA members
- Design and implement an effective On-Site Orientation and Training (OSOT) for the incoming VISTA member(s), and (if applicable) training for sub-site supervisors
- Build and strengthen relationships with VISTAs that result in retention and successful completion of project tasks

# Core Principles

## Poverty Focus

The statutory purpose of VISTA is to support efforts to fight poverty. The goal of every project must be to help individuals and communities out of poverty, not simply make poverty more tolerable. VISTA projects should focus on long-term solutions rather than short-term services.

## Sustainable Solutions

As directed by Congress, VISTAs are short-term resources that serve to build the long-term sustainability of anti-poverty programs. VISTA projects should be developed with a goal to phase out the need for VISTA members and maintain the ability of the project to continue without them.

## Community Empowerment

Prospective and current VISTA project sponsors must ensure their project engages low-income community residents in planning, developing, implementing, and evaluating the project. The project must be responsive and relevant to the lives of the community residents, and tap into inherent community assets, strengths, and resources.

## Capacity Building

VISTA projects leverage resources for, or expand the scale, reach, efficiency or effectiveness of, programs or organizations that fight poverty. Rather than providing direct services to low-income individuals and communities, VISTAs strengthen and support organizations by building infrastructure, expanding community partnerships, securing long-term resources, coordinating training for participants, and more as determined by local needs. VISTAs should create systems that remain long after their service ends. VISTA members focus on capacity building activities. They perform limited direct service, which primarily includes activities that address individual clients' immediate needs, under special initiatives.

Furthermore, VISTAs may not engage in activities that would supplant the tasks of, or displace, paid staff, contractors, or existing volunteers. This prohibition includes activities related to the application to and the management of other CNCS grants and programs.

# VISTA Impact Facts

# Impacting VISTAs

## Findings from the JBS Competency Study

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) commissioned JBS International to identify the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that individuals need to successfully complete their VADs. The initial model was drafted by a team of workplace competency experts and a working group of VISTA host sites, supervisors, and members.

In total they identified six competency areas: Personal Effectiveness, Academic, Workplace, Program Area Knowledge, VISTA Technical, and VISTA Knowledge Competencies.

*Most often used Personal Effectiveness Competencies reported by VISTAs:*

**95%**
initiative: working independently

**92%**
personal responsibility

**91%**
interpersonal skills: communicating

**88%**
interpersonal skills: listening

**85%**
ambition

"Members who reported developing competencies through supervision / coaching reported both increased satisfaction and an increased likelihood of completing their VADs."

"Member supervision is a key source of competencies needed for VISTA satisfaction and success…"

"The greatest number of competencies was supported by supervision / coaching and PSO."

"Members who said they did not arrive at their position with leadership skills, cited supervision and coaching as the number one resource that helped them develop these skills."

# Impacting VISTAs, cont.

## A Former Member in Her Own Words

"My supervisor believes in the work that she does. Her asset-based approach to management balances creative opportunities for employees to do their respective best work with a long-term vision aligned with the organization's mission. She not only fostered a work environment in which I could grow and learn, but also helped me in my considerations for graduate school programs and wrote recommendations to help me get there."

*—Jamie R., former VISTA*

## Reflections on Supervision from VISTA Supervisors

"Being a supervisor takes a lot of time and, if that's not your main job, you have to make sure you carve time into your schedule to deal with it. Keep that time sacrosanct: Don't let other kinds of meetings intervene."

*—Patricia Rivera, Chicago Public Schools Homeless Education, Chicago, IL*

"I wish someone told me how important informal supervision is. Because I'm not there [with my members] everyday, it's important that I sometimes say, 'Let's get a cup of coffee or go for a walk.' I almost get more out of those sessions than the formal ones."

*—Melissa Burwell, Minnesota Alliance With Youth Promise Fellows, Minneapolis, MN*

"It's so much about building relationships. It's not just the time, but the emotional investment. I didn't realize [at first] how much supervising would be about establishing and maintaining communications. The flip side of that is you also have to set boundaries. Don't be so available that people take advantage and you aren't able to do some of the other work you need to get done."

*—Karen Mauldin-Curtis, Peace Corps Fellows Program, Macomb, IL*

# Coaching Self Assessment Readiness Quiz

*Please reflect on your current confidence and ability to supervise and work with VISTAs in the following four critical coaching areas.*

## Critical Coaching Focus Areas

| | Strongly Disagree | | | | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.** I feel confident to coach VISTA members to successfully implement their VISTA Assignment Descriptions (VAD). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **2.** I feel confident to coach my member to help anticipate and address various needs that naturally occur for a member throughout the VISTA cycle of service. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **3.** I feel confident in my ability to coach my member to work with me so that we function together as an effective team. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **4.** I feel confident in my ability to coach a member to develop critical awareness and insights about topics related to community leadership, development, service, content area advocacy, and lifelong service and learning. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

# Reflection: Impacting Communities, Organizations, VISTAs & You

*Review your scores on the Coaching Self Assessment Readiness Quiz and think about what you have learned so far about the impact of your role. Complete the reflection activity using one or more of the prompts.*

## Writing Prompts

How will you move yourself further along the "coaching" scale to score 5 in all areas?

How do you want to develop as a supervisor?

What do you want to get out of the VISTA experience?

Who are your allies and supporters?

What will you do to focus on self-care during this year of service?

# VISTA Supervisor Training Program

*A series of blended learning experiences designed to build supervisor skills, share field-generated resources and create successful projects and member experiences.*

## Pre-Application Campus Study

- VISTA 101
- VISTA 201

## Supervisor Chosen

- Intermediary/single-site awarded VISTA position(s)

## Pre-Work Campus Study

- Create Campus profile
- Review and begin Learning Plan

*Examples:*

Welcome packet, 30 days prior to Supervisor Orientation

Terms & Conditions

Civil Rights Course

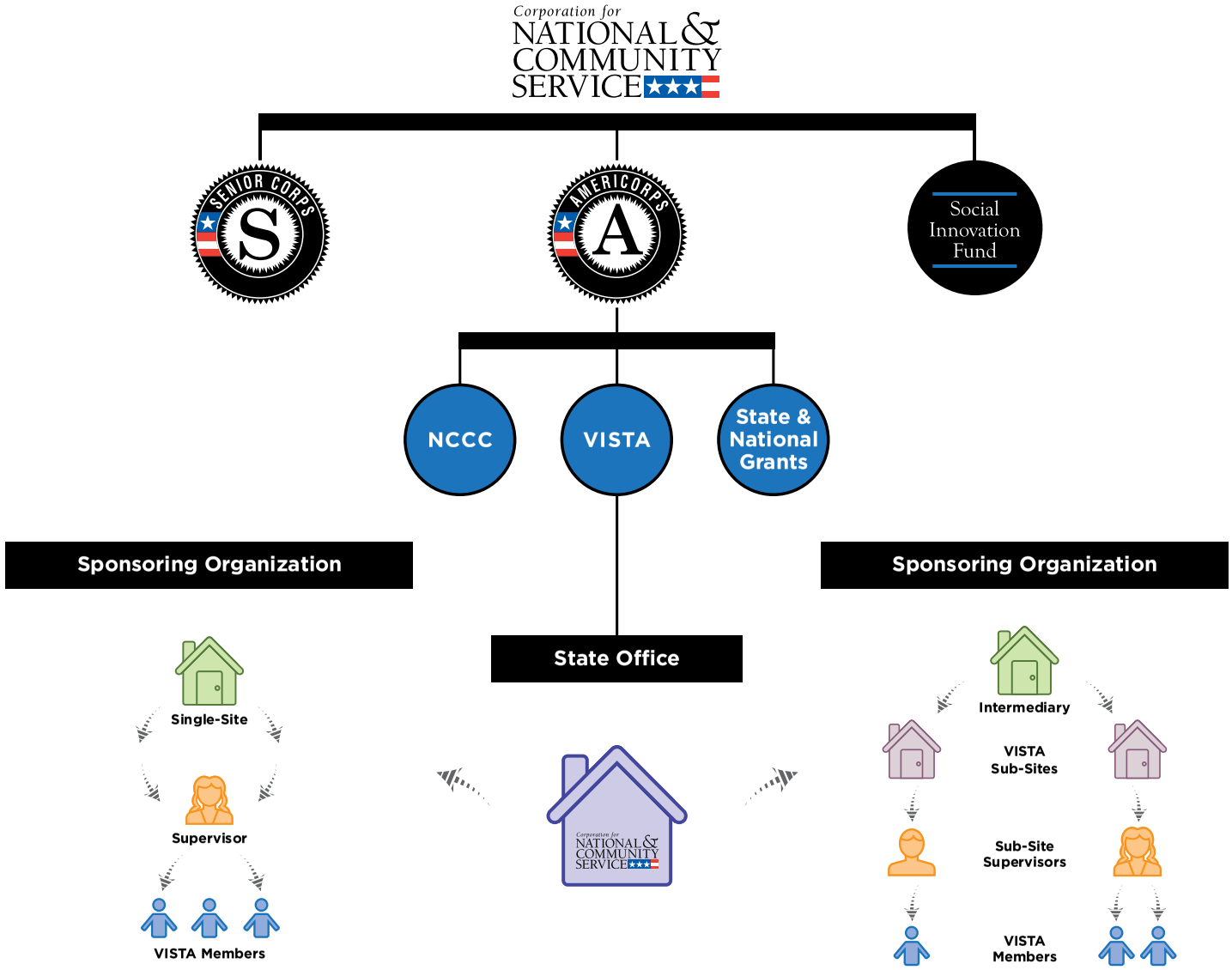
## In-Person Study

- National orientation & training
- 3 days of facilitated learning and project planning

## Online Offerings

- Continue Learning Plan
- Supervisor Forums
- Corporation State Office page for your state
- Ongoing VISTA Supervisor webinars

# Service Connections



# Mix & Mingle

| | Who | Name | What | When |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***First Appointment*** | *Find someone who has sparked your interest.* | | *Share what brought you to this position as a VISTA supervisor and what you hope to gain from your experience. Then talk with your partner about the most challenging aspect (so far) of being a VISTA supervisor. Then share what has been the most rewarding part so far.* | |
| ***Second Appointment*** | *Find someone who is working in your focus area.* | | *Tell them a little bit about your project and talk about the change you hope to bring to your community—the impact you hope to have—through your work! Since the ultimate goal of the VISTA project is to reduce poverty, talk with your partner about how your project addresses poverty.* | |

# VISTA Campus Scavenger Hunt

*Locate the resources on the VISTA Campus that answer the following questions. Write the URLs in the spaces provided.*

## Member Support

1. A VISTA asks you for more details on the VISTA child care benefits. What page on the Campus would you direct her to?

2. A VISTA asks for a reporting tool to use to share her accomplishments with you. What resource on the Campus can she use to report PM data to you?

3. You oversee a multi-state project and discover that some of your VISTAs in rural areas feel lonely and would like to find other VISTAs in their communities. What tool can they use on the Campus to find other VISTAs and alumni?

4. Your members are in their last quarter of service and need to begin thinking about what they will do next. You would like to find some end-of-service talking points to use during your member check-ins. Where do you find them?

5. Your member has requested personal leave and you need to review the policy on leave. Where do you find the details about leave?

## Working with sub-sites

1. A sub-site supervisor asks for guidance on how to write a VAD. What resource on the Campus would you direct him to?

2. You need to develop a training for your sub-site supervisors. Where can you find support materials to do so on the Campus?

# VISTA Campus Scavenger Hunt, cont.

3. You want to provide a webinar on coaching and supervision for your sub-site supervisors. What resource could you adapt for your webinar?

4. What resource outlines the roles, responsibilities and expectations for VISTA supervisors?

## Training Resources for you, your team, your organization

1. You would like to show the VISTA Legacy video to your Executive Director and colleagues, so they can know more about the VISTA program. Where do you find the video on the Campus?

2. You want to point your members and sub-sites to synchronous e-learning opportunities. What is available on the Campus?

3. You need to get up to speed on eGrants, where do you find support?

4. You heard about the VISTA Leaders Action Learning Challenge resources and want to explore what is available. Where do you find products created by leaders?

5. You are curious how other supervisors have structured their OSOT. What tool can you use to reach out to other supervisors to find out?

# Capacity Building Definitions

## Capacity Building

Tasks and activities to create, expand or strengthen an organization's systems or processes. These tasks and activities include the transfer of knowledge, relationships and products.

## Transfer of Knowledge

Information gained by the VISTA member during his/her term of service is passed along to other people in an organization in a deliberately designed way.

## Transfer of Products

Deliverables created by the VISTA member during his/her term of service are passed along to other people in an organization in a deliberately designed way.

## Transfer of Relationships

Professional contacts developed by the VISTA member during his/her term of service are passed along to other people in an organization in a deliberately designed way.

# VISTA Impact App

### What is the purpose of the VISTA Impact App?

The AmeriCorps VISTA Impact App is designed to help VISTAs in the field track data such as resources donated to an organization, volunteers recruited and managed, veterans and military families served, and staff trained. This data aligns with the performance measures in the Corporation for National and Community Service's strategic plan.

The app is intended to help each VISTA tell a piece of the story about activities at their site. Contributions will be rolled up to tell the larger story of what AmeriCorps VISTA has contributed to your organization and to the nation.

The data tracked through the app will also help inform you, the supervisors, throughout the year of service about what your VISTAs are doing. It will help in reporting the progress of the project. This app is intended to help VISTAs recall their activities, and is not meant to replace any collection instrument at your service site.

### Does the VISTA Impact App satisfy the data collection protocols for CNCS National Performance Measures as used in VISTA Project Application and Project Progress Report?

The VISTA Impact App is intended to aid you in understanding results of VISTA activities. It does not necessarily collect all information to satisfy data collection requirements for CNCS National Performance Measures for reporting on a Project Progress Report. Sponsors should review the requirements for specific CNCS National Performance Measures on the CNCS performance measurement page: ***www.nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/vista*** to determine what additional systems or information may need to be collected to satisfy data collection protocols.

### How can I share this app with my VISTAs?

The VISTA Impact App is a mobile webpage and is available via a link on the VISTA Campus. Go to ***impact.vistacampus.gov*** to access the app. Please share the URL with your VISTAs.

### Do I automatically see the data my VISTAs enter?

Your VISTA will be asked to enter their supervisor's email address when they create their app account. You will receive an email when your VISTAs create an Impact App account, but you will not see entries as the VISTAs enter them. Your VISTAs need to send you an email summary of their data by clicking the "Send" button on the My Report page and selecting you as the recipient. (The VISTAs can also send an email report to themselves.) Talk to your VISTAs about the most effective way to notify you about of their Impact App activity.

### My site has a volunteer and donor database. Does this app replace it?

This app does not replace any of your site's reporting tools. Your site's tools will collect more detail about your site activities and key players, and will incorporate input from multiple users. AmeriCorps VISTA built the Impact App to help track each VISTA's VISTA-related activities.

# VISTA Impact App, cont.

### How do the VISTAs measure and collect the data?

The VISTAs can enter data in batches and organize them by date. They are able to return to these entries and edit them at any time.

The VISTA Impact App also has a category to list additional service activities. Before asking your VISTAs to utilize this space, review CNCS' performance measurements to ensure the activity does not fit into another category.

### How do my VISTAs see what they have entered?

Your VISTAs can view their entries immediately by navigating through the sections of the app. They will be sorted by date, with entries containing the most recent date at the top of each section. They can also send themselves a report summary of all entries by clicking the "Send" button on the My Report page and choosing themselves as the recipient.

### How can my VISTAs update an entry?

Navigate to the entry they wish to update and simply change any field. Keep in mind that past versions of an entry are not saved.

To edit account information, visit My Settings and change any field they wish to edit.

### How to log in?

The username and password for the app are the same as those for the VISTA Campus. If your VISTAs are having difficulty, reset their password on the VISTA Campus. Please note that this will also change the VISTA Campus credentials.

### Can VISTA HQ see what is entered?

Yes, VISTA headquarters is able to view a database with all entries in the VISTA Impact App.

### What if there are multiple VISTAs at my site?

Whether your site is served by multiple VISTAs or just one, each VISTA should only account for activities which fall under their direct responsibility and/or are connected directly to their VAD. To avoid duplication in reporting, ask your VISTAs to provide notes with each entry.

### Where can I find more information?

More information on performance measures and terms referenced in the VISTA Impact App can be found on the CNCS performance measurement page: ***www.nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/vista***. For training and resources, visit the VISTA Campus.

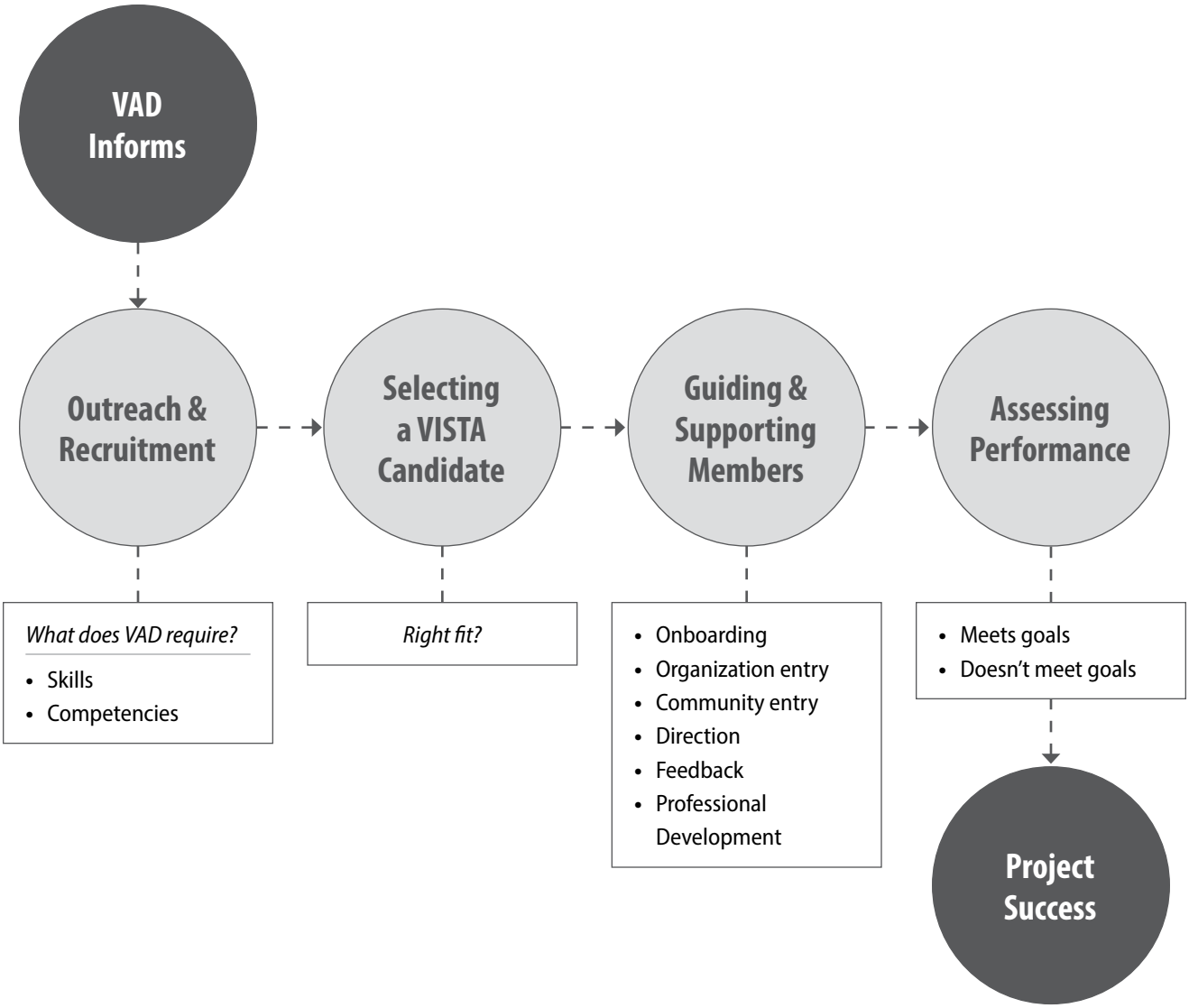
# VAD Sample

| | |
|---|---|
| TITLE | Mentor Recruitment and Management Systems Designer |
| SPONSORING ORGANIZATION | Waketa Community Services (WCS) |
| PROJECT NAME | MentorCorps |
| PROJECT NUMBER | 12ABCD345 |
| PROJECT PERIOD | 08/20/20XX - 08/19/20YY |
| SITE NAME | *if applicable* |
| FOCUS AREA(S) | Education (Primary) |
| NOTE | If your VAD is not accepted, the State Office will note the reason(s) why here. |

## VISTA Assignment Objectives & Member Activities

| | |
|---|---|
| PROJECT GOAL | *To help ensure that children of incarcerated parents receive the educational, social, and emotional support they need to help them break the cycle of poverty, the MentorCorps VISTA project will build the capacity of WCS by developing a sustainable volunteer recruitment and management system for its mentoring program.* |
| OBJECTIVE | Assess the current state of WCS' efforts in reaching, selecting, and supporting volunteer mentors, and create or revise policies, procedures, and documents to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of the mentor recruitment and matching system. |
| MEMBER ACTIVITIES | **1.** Research the history of volunteer programs at WCS.<br>**a.** Identify strengths and challenges of the current program. Based on this report, make a plan for improvement. |
| | **2.** Develop systems for screening and matching mentors. |
| OBJECTIVE | Set up outreach systems and build partnerships with community organizations in order to spread the word about the mentor program. Develop targeted marketing materials. |
| MEMBER ACTIVITIES | **1.** Plan for outreach and recruitment.<br>**a.** Identify skills, abilities, and experiences sought in volunteer mentors.<br>**b.** Write volunteer task descriptions that include: qualifications, activities, benefits, time commitment, and other expectations.<br>**c.** Develop partnerships with community organizations whose members are possible mentors or who can support the organization in other ways.<br>**d.** Develop partnerships with people or organizations that understand the needs of children of prisoners and can assist with the training and support of mentors. |
| | **2.** Market the program to targeted audiences. |

# VAD Informs


VAD Informs
Outreach & Recruitment
Selecting a VISTA Candidate
Guiding & Supporting Members
Assessing Performance
What does VAD require?
• Skills
• Competencies
Right fit?
• Onboarding
• Organization entry
• Community entry
• Direction
• Feedback
• Professional Development
• Meets goals
• Doesn't meet goals
Project Success

# VAD Stations Activity Instructions

***Directions for all stations:***

1. Read the brief introduction to your station activity.
2. Follow the steps outlined in the individual station activities below and access the workbook for related worksheets.

## 1. Complete VAD Tutorial

Prepare to write your VADs. Begin by watching the "Creating Effective VADs" tutorial on the VISTA Campus and learn the necessary background for creating a VAD, the VAD's key elements, and how the VAD can be used for managing the project. Then begin to create one or more VADs for your project.

1. Log on to VISTA Campus at: www.vistacampus.gov and go to the "Creating Effective VADs." You will find it under: Supervisors – The VISTA Assignment. Use this link if you cannot find it: www.vistacampus.gov/resources/creating-effective-vads
2. Watch the "Creating Effective VADs" tutorial (approx. 10 minutes). Use the "VAD Worksheet" in your workbook to take notes as you go through the course.
3. Discuss what you learned with members of your group. Or begin creating your VAD with the VAD Template that you can download at the end of the course. You can also find a copy of the Template on "The VISTA Assignment" page of the Campus.

## 2. Peer Feedback

Give and receive constructive feedback on your VAD.

1. Discuss with your group members which option you would like to take:
    - Option One: Work in pairs
    - Option Two: Have everyone look at one person's VAD and provide group feedback; then look at another VAD, then another until everyone has received feedback
2. Use the "Peer Feedback" worksheet in your workbook to record feedback and ideas.
3. After reviewing the VADs, discuss with a partner or group.

# VAD Stations Activity Instructions, cont.

## 3. Plan to Train Sub-Site Supervisors on Using VADs at their Sub-Sites

Discuss and plan how to best train your sub-site supervisors to use VADs at their sites and throughout the project.

1. Log on to VISTA Campus at: www.vistacampus.gov and go to the "Training Your Sub-Site Supervisors About VADs" worksheet. You will find it under: Supervisors – The VISTA Assignment. Use this link if you cannot find it: www.vistacampus.gov/resources/training-your-sub-site-supervisors-about-vads. Download and save the worksheet to your computer.

2. Use the worksheet to plan how you'll orient your sub-site supervisors on the VAD. Think about key points you'll make in each of the categories, as well as how to best communicate these points and what VISTA Campus resources can assist you in presenting the material.

3. Identify possible activities or methods of presenting this information.

4. Explore VAD resources and identify resources (on the Campus) you can use to help convey critical points.

## 4. Inherited VAD

Discuss the challenges of "inheriting" a VAD that you didn't create and begin planning your next steps for "owning" it or adapting it, if necessary, to meet your needs.

1. Begin by sharing and discussing your challenges with inheriting a VAD.

2. Using the "Inherited VAD" worksheet in your workbook, answer, as a group, the questions listed and jot down your responses in the space provided.

# VAD Stations Activity Instructions, cont.

## 5. Using the VAD in Your Project

Discuss and plan how to use the VAD at your sites, throughout the VISTA project. (For single-site supervisors and sub-site supervisors)

1. Write down what you think are the most important issues related to using VADs at your site; then discuss briefly with your group.

2. Log on to VISTA Campus at: www.vistacampus.gov and go to the "Using VADs Throughout your Project" worksheet. You will find it under: Supervisors – The VISTA Assignment. Use this link if you cannot find it: www.vistacampus.gov/resources/using-vads-throughout-your-project. Download and save the worksheet to your computer.

3. Use the worksheet to begin creating a plan for using the VAD at your site by:
    - Identifying possible activities or methods of using the VAD in each area specified
    - Identifying resources (on the Campus) you can use to convey key points

## 6. Facilitator Feedback

Talk to your facilitator about your VADs and get answers to any questions or concerns you have.

1. Make an "appointment" to speak with the facilitator: he/she will have time for three (approx.) 5-minute appointments.

2. After your talk with the facilitator, if needed, use the "VAD Worksheet" in your workbook to further write about and refine the sections of your VAD. And if you need more input on your VADs, please talk with the CSO staff on-site or get in touch with your State Office.

# VAD Worksheet

*Title:*

## Project Details

## Goal of the Project

## Objectives

## Activities

# Peer Feedback

*Consider these questions when reviewing each others' VADs:*

## Goal

- Does the goal of the project seem realistic, given the time frame?

## Objectives

- Are the individual objectives clearly and simply written?
- Are they realistic?
- Are the timeframes realistic?

## Member Activities

- Do the activities focus on capacity building?

## General

- Is the language in the VAD specific enough?
- Is the anti-poverty mission articulated clearly?

# Inherited VAD

*Important questions to ask about an inherited VAD:*

**1.** What do you think is effective in this VAD?

**2.** What do you think could be improved?

**3.** How would you re-work the activities?

**4.** What member skills and backgrounds do you want for the next cohort you recruit that you do not have yet?

# Supervisor Questions for VISTA Members

*To help inform your recruitment and On-Site Orientation and Training plan, use this tool to gather perspectives on these topics from VISTA candidates.*

## Recruitment

1. How did you first hear about VISTA? How did you hear about the program you will serve with?

2. What convinced you to apply to be a VISTA? What recruitment strategies worked with you? If you were going to recruit new VISTAs, how would you do it?

3. How do you think we could recruit a more diverse pool of VISTAs?

## Member Professional Development

1. How do you hope to grow/develop during your VISTA year?

2. What do you hope to learn about poverty during your year?

# Core Competencies

*Place a* **STAR** (*) *by the competencies that are essential for the success of your project (and for the success of the VISTA within your organization)—those you can't live without!*

*Place a* **PLUS** (+) *by the competencies that you hope your VISTAs will bring with them to service.*

*Place a* **DELTA** (△) *by the competencies you can train your VISTAs in once they are recruited.*

## BASIC WORK COMPETENCIES

### TIER 1 — Personal Effectiveness

1. Interpersonal Skills
2. Initiative
3. Personal Responsibility
4. Ambition
5. Adaptability & Flexibility
6. Leadership
7. Willingness to Learn

### TIER 2 — Academic

1. Reading
2. Writing
3. Mathematics
4. Science, Technology & Computer Skills
5. Communication: Listening & Speaking
6. Critical & Analytical Thinking

### TIER 3 — Workplace

1. Networking
2. Planning & Organizing
3. Problem Solving & Decision Making
4. Documentation
5. Organizational Fundamentals

## VISTA SPECIFIC COMPETENCIES

### TIER 4 — Technical Skills

1. Planning & Collaboration
2. Resource Management
3. Organizational Development
4. Volunteer Management
5. Evaluation

### TIER 5 — VISTA Knowledge

1. Understanding VISTA
2. Life as a VISTA
3. VISTA Placement & VAD
4. Community Outreach & Marketing
5. Resource Mobilization
6. Community Capacity Building for Sustainability

### UPPER — Program Area Knowledge

*Specific topics such as:*

- Children & Youth
- Disaster Recovery
- Education
- Entrepreneurship
- Eldercare
- Ex-offenders
- Environment

***Adapted from*** *JBS International, Inc. (May 2013), VISTA Training Assessment Summary of Findings.*

*Before working on the Individual Development Plan (IDP), reflect on the ways you can make the discussion more beneficial for both you and your VISTA:*

# VISTA Individual Development Plan

| Knowledge & Skills Needed to Accomplish the VAD | Priority *L M H* | Learning Opportunities & Resources | Type *(see below)* | Timeframe *(mo/yr)* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

**PRIORITY:** L = Low M = Medium H = High

**TYPE OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITY:** 1 = Online 2 = In-person 3 = Informal 4 = Other

# Communication Styles Case Study

## Section 1

Two VISTAs, Rachelle and Jake, work directly with one supervisor, Sally. Both Rachelle and Jake are recent college graduates and excited to be VISTAs. Sally is new at supervising entry-level staff members and has acknowledged that this will be a learning process for her.

Sally scheduled an On-Site Orientation and Training (OSOT), starting at 8 am, to cover all the needed details. She spends most of her time out of the office with external stakeholders, so this was the one time she had available to orient Rachelle and Jake. Sally started the meeting at 8 am. She spent the first ten minutes talking about her weekend trip with her family. She asked Rachelle and Jake about their weekends. She then asked both of them how they were feeling after their week at PSO. At about 8:45 am, Sally started into the agenda.

Sally spent the entire day working with the VISTAs, going over all relevant policies and answering questions about their VADs. At the end of the day, Sally said, "I've got meetings the rest of the week. Just send me an email if something comes up. Let's plan to check in a month from now. How does that sound?" Rachelle felt overwhelmed. She expected more frequent check-ins, but didn't say anything. Jake just said, "Okay" and left the meeting.

## Section 2

A couple of months later, Sally held a meeting with Jake, Rachelle, her assistant, Remy, and John, a community volunteer working on fundraising. Sally explained that Jake and Rachelle would be updating the organization's donor database by mailing and collecting donor information forms. Jake thought there might be a faster way to manage the project—an idea that was pretty much the opposite of how Sally said to do it. He spoke up, saying: "I would probably go about that differently. Like, what about if we go directly to the donors to get their updated email addresses, instead of having them fill out the form?" Sally quickly responded, "Well, this is the way we've been doing it for three years and it has worked fine."

Jake responded, "I disagree with you. I think it will take more time in the long run to do it this way."

Unfortunately, the database project went awry. Jake filled in the wrong fields in an Excel file that Rachelle sent out to the organization's board of directors. Remy (Sally's assistant) worked with Jake and Rachelle to remedy the situation and within two hours, the data file was corrected and sent out again. Later, Sally sent an email to Jake about what happened. At the end of her message Sally wrote, "Jake, I am deeply disappointed. You made a major mistake with the data."

# Communication Styles

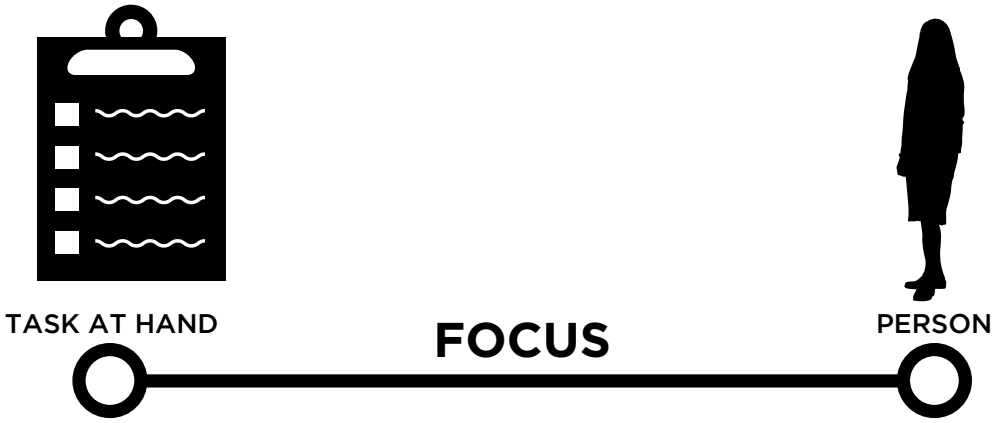
- People say what they mean and mean what they say.
- It's important to be direct and tell it like it is.
- The truth is more important than sparing someone's feelings.

- People are indirect; they imply/suggest what they mean.
- You need to read between the lines.
- Telling the truth, if it hurts, should be tempered.

- The facts and expediency are more important than being careful about what you say.
- Getting/giving information is the overriding goal of the communication exchange.
- It's okay to say 'no' and confront or criticize people.

- Maintaining harmony is the overriding goal of the communication exchange.
- Confrontation, criticism, and saying no are avoided or handled delicately.
- What one says and what one feels often are not the same.

# Communication Styles, cont.




- Do business first and then have small talk.
- Establishing rapport and a good personal relationship are not essential to getting the job done.
- The goal is accomplishing the task.

- Begin with small talk and then move to business.
- A personal relationship is a prerequisite to getting the job done.
- The goal is building the relationship.

# Guidelines for Conducting Effective Conferences & Giving Feedback

## Guidelines for Conducting Effective Conferences

- Make sure they are regular, ongoing, and frequent enough (weekly if possible)
- One-on-one is best
- Make them practical/useful to both of you
- Provide useful direction
- Provide affirming and constructive feedback
- Include elements to promote growth and discovery

## Guidelines for Giving Feedback

### Positive Feedback

Disregard everything you've heard to the effect that you don't have to say anything if things go well, just when they are messed up! Praising people for a job well done is both motivating and useful. It makes the other person feel valued and appreciated and it guides him/her for future actions and contributions.

It is especially important to pay attention to your communication style when giving positive feedback. The more direct and specific you are, the clearer the feedback will be. For example, if you say, "That was fantastic!," the other person will feel good, but will he/she know what was fantastic about what he/she did or why you felt it was fantastic?

*Model:*

- State specifically what you liked
- State why—its effect on the organization, you, the community, etc.

### Constructive Feedback

Giving constructive feedback is part of your responsibility as supervisor to keep performance on track. It is a task that, when performed well, can have a very positive outcome. It can be a crucial step in the learning and growing process.

Again, keep in mind your communication style. Context is everything. Build on your relationship. Kind honesty is usually the best approach.

*Model:*

- State what you liked (if there were positive aspects of his/her performance)
- State specifically what needs to be improved
- State why—provide context (for all involved)
- Engage in a discussion
- Agree on a resolution

# Getting the Word Out: Recruitment Avenues

## In-person

- Community events
- Career or job fairs
- Workforce centers
- College recruitment offices
- Word of mouth to friends and family
- Word of mouth to current or former VISTAs
- Word of mouth to colleagues and similar organizations
- Flyers posted in the community

## Electronic & Traditional Media

- Email announcement to colleagues
- Email announcement to similar organizations
- Posting on my organization's website
- Twitter post
- Facebook post
- LinkedIn post
- Ad in newspaper
- Ad or announcement in professional journals or newsletters

## Websites

- My AmeriCorps portal
- Hands On Network Local Action Center
- VolunteerMatch.org
- Craig's List
- Idealist.org
- Indeed.com
- Change.org
- Opportunityknocks.org
- Monster.com

# Your Local Recruitment Landscape

1. What other VISTA positions are available in your area?

2. Who else is seeking members in your region or city?

3. What types of positions are open?

4. What are their criteria and application requirements/process?

5. How does your position announcement compare to others?

6. What stands out for you in the listings?

7. What language do people use for their 2-line teaser?

8. If you have a written announcement for your project, how does your announcement compare to the others you see?

9. What would you adopt for your announcement?

# Sample Two-Line Teasers

Corporation for NATIONAL & COMMUNITY SERVICE

**My AmeriCorps**

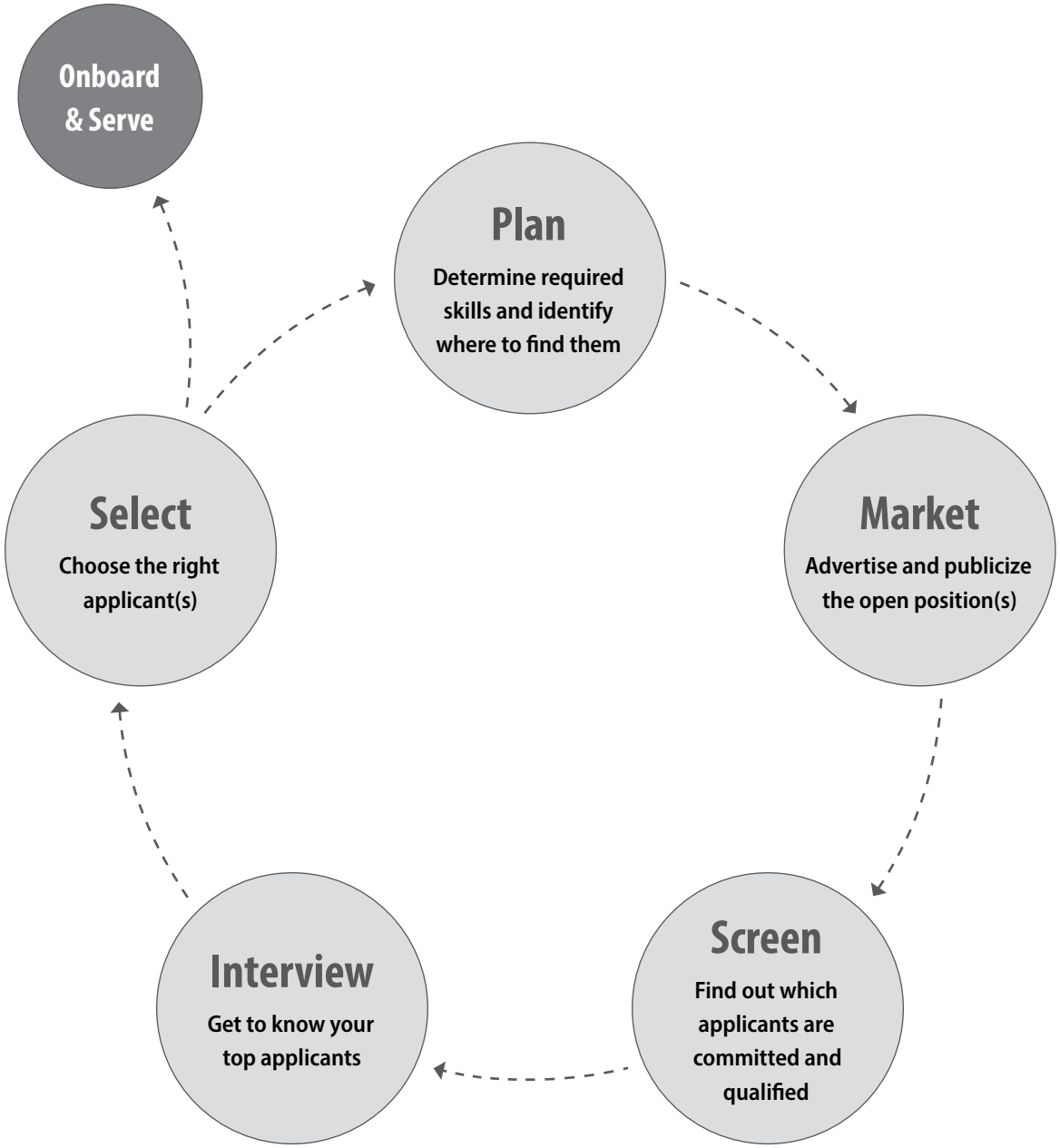
*Your Place to Manage Your AmeriCorps Experience*

Contact My AmeriCorps | Login

FONT SIZE: Default | Large

| FOCUS | LOCATION | DESCRIPTION |
|---|---|---|
| **International** | **Arizona** | Do you have an interest in international affairs and humanitarian efforts? The Arizona Refugee Resettlement Program is recruiting for a Health Care Coordinator to benefit refugees in Arizona. |
| **Youth** | **Various** | Join a new VISTA program with the US Department of Interior (DOI). Work in a national park or wildlife refuge to foster economic development, healthy futures, and programs for at-risk youth. |
| **Education, Youth** | **Utah** | Big Picture is a high school that inspires and empowers low-income students to make their education individualized, real-world, and rigorous, using projects, internships, travel, and service. |
| **Education** | **Washington** | Got FUN? The Bookmobile supports a fun bunch of people, books, activities and connections. Its library outreach programs support folks in two rural counties. |
| **Arts, Education, Environment** | **Vermont** | The Willowell Foundation, based on 230 acres in Monkton, Vermont, connects people with the arts, education, the environment, and each other through land-based programs. |
| **Poverty** | **New York** | Affordable-housing nonprofit will begin research to show that providing housing for the homeless costs the public less than providing support services while they live on the street. |
| **Poverty, Youth** | **Georgia** | Peach County 4-H in Ft. Valley, GA, needs YOU to fight poverty with passion through 4-H—the largest positive youth development organization in the world! |
| **Education, Youth** | **Minnesota** | Join a dedicated team of hard-working professionals and help to further develop and expand an in-school literacy tutoring program for at-risk youth in kindergarten through 2nd grade. |
| **Education, Health** | **Oregon** | Apple Seeds inspires healthy living through garden-based education. Our Farm Program Coordinator will assist the Farm Manager as well as others in development and capacity building at our Teaching Farm. |

# Stages of AmeriCorps VISTA Recruitment




Developed by the Summer 2013 Recruitment Action Learning Challenge Team:

- Stanley Brajer, Kevin Gong, Andrea Grant, Regan Stark, and Sam Rigotti
- Coach: Kapila Wewegama

# Recruitment Checklist

*VISTA member recruitment is a multi-step process that can be both rewarding and challenging. Use this set of sample activities to create a customized process that fits your structure and policies.*

## Plan

- ☐ Outline steps in your marketing, screening, interviewing, and selection process
- ☐ Create your recruitment task list
- ☐ Draft your recruitment timeline
- ☐ Set up tracking systems
- ☐ Identify staff and their roles
- ☐ Prepare supplemental questionnaires, interview questions, and program information to share with applicants

## Market

- ☐ Complete, submit, and get approval for your VAD(s) from your CNCS State Office
- ☐ Brainstorm personal and professional competencies that match your organizational needs and the VAD
- ☐ Imagine potential VISTA(s) for your program, and tailor your outreach and opportunity listings towards this ideal
- ☐ Identify strategies to reach potential candidates who match the personal and professional competencies you are looking for
- ☐ Identify community groups and agencies that have direct contacts with target groups you are trying to reach. You can, for example, work with other VISTA projects in your area to expand your recruiting network
- ☐ Develop your message and write your Opportunity Listing for My AmeriCorps based on your list of competencies, the VAD, and your ideal candidate profile
- ☐ Submit and get approval for your Opportunity Listing from your CNCS State Office
- ☐ Post your Opportunity Listing on My AmeriCorps
- ☐ Advertise your position (via word-of-mouth, online, print, etc.) based on your list of locations to find candidates who match the personal and professional competencies you need
- ☐ Be prepared to market your program to potential candidates; they will be interviewing you too

# Recruitment Checklist, cont.

## Screen

- [ ] Prepare your benefits and limitations of service (terms and conditions) information to share during pre-screening activities
- [ ] Conduct pre-screening activities (e.g., pre-screen phone calls, applicant Living Allowance sample budget, commitment scale ratings)
- [ ] Round 1: Narrow your list of applicants
- [ ] Apply your screening and selection criteria to narrow your list of applicants (i.e., do they meet the position requirements identified by your program, did they complete all required steps, are all documents accounted for and complete, did they stay in touch, did they complete tasks in a timely manner)
- [ ] Work with sub-sites to identify where each VISTA will serve
- [ ] Round 2: Narrow your list of applicants
- [ ] Review and rate applicants and materials
- [ ] Round 3: Narrow your list of applicants

## Interview

- [ ] Conduct interviews round 1
- [ ] Conduct interviews round 2
- [ ] Identify top picks and back-up candidates

## Select

- [ ] Conduct reference checks
- [ ] Offer your candidate(s) a position
- [ ] Outline next steps for the candidate including a timeline for when service will start and required documentation
- [ ] Inform the VISTA candidate of required next steps:
  1. Create a Travel Request Profile in My.Americorps.gov to register for Pre-Service Orientation
  2. Complete direct deposit paperwork for living stipend and other payments from CNCS, as well as other paperwork
  3. Create a VISTACampus.gov log in, and complete the PSO preparation web activities
  4. Print out a copy of their VAD to bring to PSO
- [ ] Retain the member you have selected before they arrive for service by checking in on a weekly basis, and making sure that documentation is turned in on time

# VISTA Recruitment Stations Activity Instructions

***Directions for all stations:***

1. Read the brief introduction to your station activity.
2. Follow the steps outlined in the individual station activities below and access the workbook for related worksheets

## 1. Plan Station Instructions

Planning is stage one of the recruitment process. In this stage you will articulate recruitment tasks, timelines, outreach methods, staffing and more to ensure a successful recruitment process. In this activity you will begin your recruitment plan.

1. Log on to VISTA Campus at: www.vistacampus.gov and access the "Creating a Recruitment Plan" resource at: www.vistacampus.gov/resources/creating-recruitment-plan and review the document.
2. After reviewing the "Creating a Recruitment Plan" document, scan other resources in the "Recruitment" section of supervisor area of the VISTA Campus. Your group may want to divvy up the section pages and have each person review a different topic.
3. Discuss what you read, including how you might use this information, and what you found with the members of your group.
4. Complete the worksheet found in the "Creating a Recruitment Plan" resource.

## 2. Market Station Instructions

Marketing for recruitment is stage two of the recruitment process. In this stage you will identify the attributes that will be most effective for your position and what members need to succeed to ensure the right fit. In this activity you will craft a recruitment posting.

1. Log on to VISTA Campus at: www.vistacampus.gov and access the "Marketing for Recruitment" resource at: www.vistacampus.gov/resources/marketing-recruitment and review the document.

# VISTA Recruitment Stations Activity Instructions, cont.

2. Review the following VISTA marketing resources for later use:
   - VISTA Branded Materials: posters, brochures
     - https://pubs.nationalservice.gov (order)
     - www.nationalservicegear.org (order)
     - www.vistacampus.gov/supervisors/recruiting (download)
   - VISTA Marketing and Media: logos, fact sheets, and media guide
     - www.nationalservice.gov/newsroom/marketing (download)

3. Discuss what you read and reviewed, including how you might use this information, with the members of your group.

4. Complete the "Successful Candidates Attributes Worksheet" and "VISTA Recruitment Posting Worksheet" in the "Marketing for Recruitment" resource.

## 3. Screen Station Instructions

Screening is stage three of the recruitment process. In this stage you will find out which candidates are committed and qualified to be VISTA members. In this activity you will outline specific screening criteria for your project.

1. Log on to VISTA Campus at: www.vistacampus.gov and access the "Screening VISTA Applicants" resource at: www.vistacampus.gov/recruiting-screening-resources and review the document.

2. Then review:
   - Siena College Prescreening Form (Word) at: www.vistacampus.gov/resources/webinars-supervisors-attracting-successful-vistas
   - Criminal History Checks for VISTAs and Leaders – Sponsor Responsibilities (PDF) at: www.vistacampus.gov/recruiting-screening-resources

3. Discuss what you read, including how you might use this information, with the members of your group.

4. Complete the "Screening Criteria Worksheet" in the "Screening VISTA Applicants" resource.

# VISTA Recruitment Stations Activity Instructions, cont.

## 4. Interview Station Instructions

Interviewing is stage four of the recruitment process. In this stage you will prepare for VISTA interviews, develop interview questions, and refine interview techniques. In this activity you will learn about conducting interviews, review sample interview questions, and practice interviewing techniques.

1. Log on to VISTA Campus at: www.vistacampus.gov and access the "Interviewing VISTA Applicants" resource at: www.vistacampus.gov/resources/interviewing-vista-applicants and review the document.

2. Then review "How to Conduct a Successful Behavioral Interview" and "Sample Questions: Behavioral Interview." Note the following resources for later use: "Preparing for a VISTA Interview Checklist" and "Illegal Interview Questions."

3. Practicing Interview Skills
   a. Pair up and choose roles: interviewer and candidate
   b. Select 2-4 questions from the "Sample Questions: Behavioral Interview" list to ask during a practice session.
   c. Listen to the candidate responses and practice giving positive feedback when a question is answered well and empathy when you see the candidate is expressing an area she would consider a challenge (or an area she has struggled with). Ask follow-up questions to clarify the challenge.
   d. Once you are finished debrief the experience with your partner.
   e. Then choose 2-4 different questions and repeat the process in opposite roles.
   f. With your partner, discuss what went well and what you might change when you interview your VISTA candidates.

## 5. Select Station Instructions

Selection is stage five of the recruitment process. In this stage you will select the best-qualified VISTA candidate and complete steps to officially bring them on board. In this activity you will review selection steps and begin outlining your selection process.

# VISTA Recruitment Stations Activity Instructions, cont.

1. Log on to VISTA Campus at: www.vistacampus.gov and access the "Selecting VISTA Members" resource at: www.vistacampus.gov/resources/selecting-vista-members and review the document.
2. Then download and review the "VISTA Acceptance Letter (DOC)" at: vistacampus.org/file.php/50/Recruiting/Selecting/vista_acceptance_letter.doc
3. Discuss what you read, including how you might use this information, with the members of your group.
4. Complete the "VISTA Selection Process Worksheet" in the "Selecting VISTA Members" resource.

## 6. Team Training & Process Enhancement Station Instructions

Recruitment process enhancement and team training affect all stages of the recruitment cycle but generally fall within the planning stage. Recruitment planning is an ongoing process so if you have already recruited members for this year, this activity will help you refine your recruitment process or think through other recruitment models. In this activity you will use a set of prompts to evaluate your current recruitment process and/or review models for distributing recruitment tasks.

1. Log on to VISTA Campus at: www.vistacampus.gov and access the "Recruitment Team Training and Process Enhancement" resource at: www.vistacampus.gov/recruiting-planning-resources and review the document.
2. Discuss what you read, including how you might use this information, with the members of your group.
3. If time permits, scan other resources in the "Recruitment" section of supervisor area of the VISTA Campus. Your group may want to divvy up the section pages and have each person review a different topic.
4. Complete the "Recruitment To Do List" in your workbook with a focus on training your recruitment team and/or outlining refinements that you want to make to your process.

# Illegal Interview Questions

Various federal, state, and local laws regulate the questions a prospective employer can ask a job applicant. The sponsoring agency's questions—on the job application, in the interview (whether that be in-person, by phone or internet) or during any testing process—must be related to the position for which the applicant is applying. The focus must be on: ***What do I need to know to decide whether or not this person can perform the functions of this position?***

*Questions should be position-related and not used to find out personal information. The sponsoring agency should not be asking questions about a person's:*

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| race | religion | age | ethnic background | sexual orientation |
| gender | marital status | disabilities | nationality | arrest record |

## Examples

### Age

| | |
|---|---|
| ***Illegal*** | • How old are you?<br>• When did you graduate from college?<br>• What is your birthday? |
| ***Legal*** | • Are you over the age of 18? |

### Nationality

| | |
|---|---|
| ***Illegal*** | • Are you a U.S. citizen?<br>• Where were you/your parents born?<br>• What is your 'native tongue?' |
| ***Legal*** | • Are you authorized to work in the United States?<br>• What languages do you read, speak, or write fluently?*<br>**This question is okay as long as it is relevant to performance of position.* |

# Illegal Interview Questions, cont.

## Examples, cont.

### Marital / Family Status

***Illegal***

- What is your marital status?
- Who do you live with?
- Do you plan to have a family? When?
- How many children do you have?
- What are your child care arrangements?

***Legal***

- Would you be willing to relocate if necessary?
- Travel is an important part of the position. Would you be willing to travel as needed to carry out the job's responsibilities?*
- The VISTA position is full time. Would you be willing and able to work longer than 8 hours a day, or weekends, if necessary?*

**These questions okay as long as all applicants for position are asked them.*

### Arrest Record

***Illegal***

- Have you ever been arrested?

***Legal***

- Have you ever been convicted of __?*

**Crime should be reasonably related to performance of job in question.*

### Disabilities

***Illegal***

- Do you have any disabilities?
- Please complete the following medical history.
- Have you had any recent or past illnesses or surgeries? If yes, list and give dates. What was the date of your last physical exam?
- How is your family's health?
- When did you lose your eyesight?

***Legal***

- Are you able to perform the essential functions of this position with or without reasonable accommodations?*

**To ask this, interviewer must have provided job description and/or thoroughly described job position.*

*In general, the interviewee is under no obligation to answer any question that is not assignment-related. If s/he chooses not to answer an unrelated assignment question, this cannot be held against them, nor can the sponsoring agency choose not to select an applicant because they have answered the question in an undesirable way. In either case, not selecting the applicant for not answering the question, or because you were not satisfied with the answer, is considered discriminatory.*

# Recruitment To-Do List

*Program* *Date*

| Task | Date Needed | Person Responsible | Date Completed | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |
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# Major Cultural Groups in Our Community

*List the major cultural groups of your community (including but not limited to ethnic cultural groups) that VISTA members need awareness about in order to be effective:*

| Group A | Group B |
|---|---|
| | |
| | |
| | |
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| | |
| | |
| | |

*Help VISTAs think through their approach to learning about the community by clarifying:*

**Group A** Cultural Groups that are a priority to learn about because they are closely linked with the member's service assignment.

**Group B** Cultural Groups that are a second priority to learn about because they are part of the community but are not closely linked with the member's service assignment.

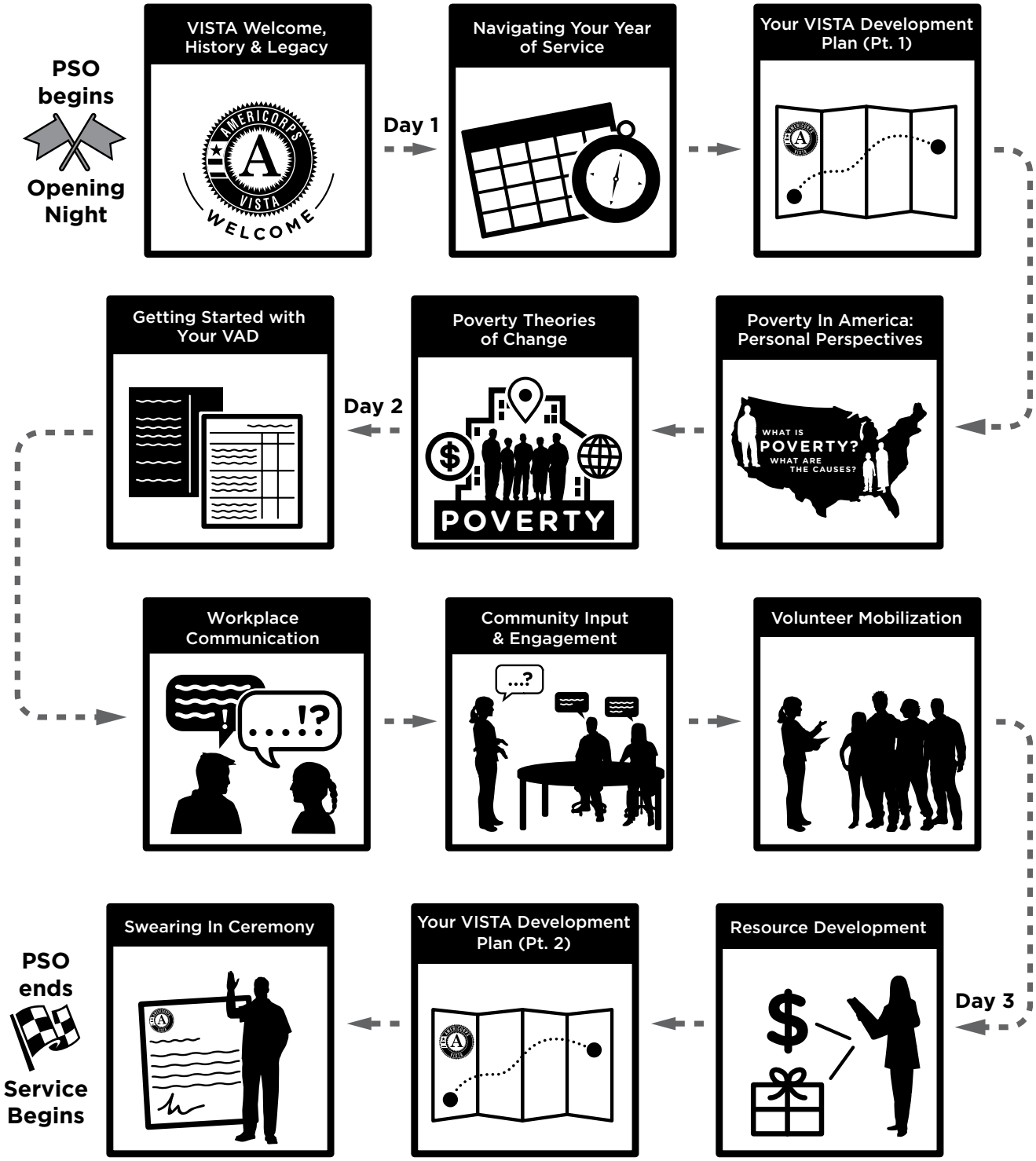
# VISTA Blended Learning & Development Program

*A continuum of training, resources, and peer connections to ensure VISTA members build capacity, alleviate poverty, and thrive throughout their service experience.*

| | In-Person Training & Support | VISTA Campus www.vistacampus.gov |
|---|---|---|
| PRE-SERVICE | 3.5 DAYS **Pre-Service Orientation** | **Pre-Service Online Tutorials** |
| IN-SERVICE | **On-Site Orientation & Training** | **Accredited Courses** *Resource Development* *Volunteer Mobilization* |
| | | **In-Service Resources & Tutorials** |
| | **Classes, Workshops & Conferences**[1] *Supported by Sponsor* | **Webinars** |
| | | **Forums** |
| CLOSE OF SERVICE | **Life After Service Events**[2] | **Transition Resources** |

1. While the On-Site Orientation & Training is required, any additional classes, workshops or conferences offered during service depends on the sponsors' capacity to make them available.
2. Life After Service events are offered by State Offices, sponsors and other entities depending on their capacities to make them available.

# Pre-Service Orientation



# OSOT Checklist

## Welcome to the community organization: Getting started

- ☐ Introduce member to the head of the organization (president/CEO/director). The head then briefly discusses the history and purpose of the organization, the project, and how the member fits in.
- ☐ Introduce member to co-workers during tour of facility.
- ☐ Show member his or her work area.
- ☐ Show location of rest rooms, lunch, and break rooms/ space.
- ☐ Member attends regular staff meeting. Take time at staff meeting to remind everyone what the member's role will be. Help the member feel welcome and part of the team.
- ☐ Discuss basic terms of work, policies, procedures.
- ☐ Explain hours of work and overtime policies, holidays and leave days.
- ☐ Explain organization rules about absenteeism, tardiness, process for reporting absence or illness.
- ☐ Discuss timesheets, leave usage.
- ☐ Explain the VISTA compensation process.
- ☐ Explain break policy and lunch hour (tell about restaurants in area).
- ☐ Explain use of telephone, mail services, copier (security code), computer network, etc.
- ☐ Explain standards of conduct, including rules of dress, personal grooming, smoking, housekeeping, etc.
- ☐ Explain parking practices and provide (or arrange for) building, office keys.
- ☐ Explain safety procedures.
- ☐ Explain how to order supplies.

## Tips for the first day

- Lunch with the member to make him or her feel at home.
- If the member has moved from another part of the country, ask how the transition is going and if you might help. Discuss housing situation, local shopping and services, banks, medical facilities, etc. If there is time at the end of the day, give member time to take care of some of these needs - everything related to housing, bank account, phone service, post office, etc.

# OSOT Checklist, cont.

## Organizational purpose and mission and the VISTA project

- [ ] Discuss in more detail the mission, background, and purpose of the sponsoring organization.
- [ ] Explain history and purpose of the organization.
- [ ] Review organization mission, goals, and objectives.
- [ ] Review organization structure.
- [ ] Provide copy of organizational chart and review staff duties.
- [ ] Explain departmental and divisional functions, goals, teams and team structure, major projects.
- [ ] Explain the purpose of the VISTA project and role of the members.
- [ ] Explain project goals and objectives.
- [ ] Review past work of project if in year 2 or 3.
- [ ] Give the member time to read any materials given to him/her.

## Member assignment, supervisory relationship, and community investigation

- [ ] Clarify individual member assignment(s), how goals will be achieved, and how the member's progress in achieving project objectives will be assessed.
- [ ] Review the VISTA Assignment Description, explain specific responsibilities.
- [ ] Important: Make it clear what the expected project outcomes are, what the member will help create and how it will help individuals or communities move out of poverty.
- [ ] Explain performance reviews (date for first review, frequency thereafter).
- [ ] Provide a copy of performance standards.
- [ ] Discuss performance expectations and standards and reporting requirements.
- [ ] Discuss specific performance objectives that will be reviewed during the initial period.
- [ ] Explain supervisory and support structure, communications, reporting, accountability.
- [ ] Discuss the working relationship between the member and direct supervisor, mutual expectations, communications style, work style, support needs, etc.
- [ ] Discuss and clarify communication procedures and practices.
- [ ] Review staff meeting and team meeting schedules.
- [ ] Explain steps in discipline procedure (verbal warning, written warning, etc.) and specify actions that result in disciplinary action.
- [ ] End on a positive, affirming note about how excited you are to have the member working on this project.
- [ ] Have the member interview other staff about work styles, communications, etc.

# OSOT Checklist, cont.

## Tips for the first week

- Give the member time to take care of any additional basic needs related to, for example, housing, bank account, phone service, post office, etc. If a staff member is available to help, have her or him accompany the new member.
- Plan a lunch with a group of office colleagues.
- Plan a team building activity with staff, other members, project collaborators, other AmeriCorps members, etc.
- Plan a potluck dinner with office staff, other members, AmeriCorps and Senior Corps members, and VISTA alumni.
- Save time for check-ins to answer questions about the organization or project.
- Set up an Independent Community Investigation Activity where the member spends a half-day exploring the community and making a mental inventory of assets, needs, and cultural practices.

## Community Investigation Activity Directions:

1. Schedule time with an expert on the community that the member will meet with after his observation.
2. Brief the member before he or she heads out into the community about where to go, what to look for, and how to ensure safety.
3. The member meets with the expert on the community discuss observations from the previous day.
4. This community "expert" provides a background on the community during a more guided tour than the member's previous day's meanderings.
5. The expert explains the nature of the low-income population served by the project.
6. The expert introduces the member to community leaders, especially those involved in the VISTA project.
7. The expert discusses cultural norms, do's and don'ts, social outlets to enjoy and those to stay away from, etc.
8. Have the member spend the afternoon with one or more partner organizations or other members and AmeriCorps state and national members involved in this or related projects.
9. Supervisor discusses impressions and findings from the Independent Community Investigation Activity with the member including the implications these have for the project and the member's assignment.

# OSOT Checklist, cont.

## Skill development

- ☐ The member accompanies staff member for the whole day out of the office - conducting community interviews, recruiting volunteer participation in project, managing volunteers on project, etc.
- ☐ The member accompanies staff member of another organization involved in similar or complementary efforts for the whole day, conducting community interviews, recruiting volunteer participation in project, managing volunteers on project etc.
- ☐ Informational/collaboration interviews with representatives from a variety of community agencies.
- ☐ Member drafts a one-month, member assignment, with clear and detailed activities and reviews it with the supervisor.

## Tips for the first month

- Have member spend time with a tech tutor or on their own learning or refining computer skills he will need (e.g., Microsoft Word, Excel, Publisher, Access) for producing flyers, pamphlets and posters; writing grant proposals; building or using contact databases; etc.
- Empower the member to begin independent implementation of project with frequent check-in sessions with supervisor and other key organization staff to see how the work is going. Supervisor makes it clear to the member that this third week is still a period of learning, practice, testing, and adapting. He should not worry about making mistakes, asking lots of questions, and experimenting.
- Set up additional skill training for the member as needed: For example, the member could participate in a public speaking class offered by the community continuing education program; learn from an experienced staff member the key components of a quality grant proposal; take an online tutorial about volunteer recruitment on the VISTA Campus (www.vistacampus.gov), or spend an afternoon with someone from the credit union to learn about the management of low-income loan programs, interest rates, and starting a small business.

# Onboarding Stations Activity Instructions

***Directions for all stations:***

1. Read the brief introduction to your station activity.
2. Follow the steps outlined in the individual station activities below and access the workbook for related worksheets

## 1. Planning and Refining your OSOT

It's important to plan both the topics you'll cover in OSOT and how best to cover them. Think of onboarding as a process and map out the sequence of activities over a few days or weeks, if you can.

1. Throughout this orientation you've been capturing ideas/activities in your notes. You now have a chance to mull it over and begin formulating an actual plan for your OSOT. Or if you have already delivered an OSOT, this is time for you to reflect on how you can refine or improve it for your next delivery.

2. In your group choose 2 to 3 people to work with.

3. Log on to VISTA Campus at: www.vistacampus.gov and go to the "Orienting your VISTA" section and take a look at the following materials. Download and save any relevant resources to your computer. (Direct URLs are also provided, in case you need them.):
   - OSOT Checklist
     www.vistacampus.gov/resources/osot-checklist
   - On-Site Orientation and Training Guidebook
     www.vistacampus.gov/resources/site-orientation-and-training-guidebook
   - OSOT Guidelines
     www.vistacampus.gov/resources/osot-guidelines

4. Discuss the materials with your group. What can you take from them?

5. Use the "Planning your Orientation" worksheet in your workbook, to construct or refine your OSOT.

# Onboarding Stations Activity Instructions, cont.

## 2. Planning a Sub-Site Supervisor Orientation

Because your sub-site supervisors have not been to SO, they are relying on you to get them up-to-speed on all they need to know (and do) to be effective VISTA supervisors. Depending on the size and set up of your project, you may need to orient them virtually, and over time. Orienting your sub-sites is as crucial as orienting your members. The sub-site supervisors are closest to the VISTA members, providing the day-to-day direction and support as well as inspiration.

1. Throughout this orientation you've been capturing ideas/activities in your notes. You now have a chance to mull it over and begin formulating an actual plan for your orienting your sub-site supervisors in each area.

2. In your group choose 2 to 3 people to work with.

3. Discuss with your small group the following:
   - Who are your sub-site supervisors? Do they have a history with national service? What do they know about VISTA? What specific training and support will they need?
   - Are there any items you listed in your notes that you want to discuss with the group?
   - What came up in the VISTA Supervisor Café that you want to cover with your site supervisors?
   - How will you train your team? Do you plan to do it in person? Or will you do it via webinar and conference calls? What tools do you need to put into place to train your team?
   - Will you do the training alone or do you have others to work with? If you are not someone with a lot of training experience, how can you get the support you need to train your team?

# Onboarding Stations Activity Instructions, cont.

4. Log on to VISTA Campus at: www.vistacampus.gov and go to the "Working with Sub-Sites" section and take a look at the following materials. Download and save to your computer any of the resources that seem relevant. (Direct URLs are also provided, in case you need them.):
   - Training Sub-Site Supervisors Syllabus
     www.vistacampus.gov/resources/training-sub-site-supervisors-syllabus
   - VISTA Sponsor and Sub-Site Supervisor Major Tasks At-a-Glance
     www.vistacampus.gov/resources/vista-sponsor-and-sub-site-supervisor-major-tasks-glance
   - Working with Sub-Sites (tutorial)
     www.vistacampus.gov/lessons/working-sub-sites
5. Use the "Planning your Orientation" worksheet in your workbook to plan and refine your Sub-Site Supervisor Orientation.

# Planning Your Orientation

*What would you like to include in your OSOT or Sub-site Supervisor Training?*

## Ideas & Topics

## Specific Activities

# VISTA Campus Scavenger Hunt Answer Key

## Member Support

1. A VISTA asks you for more details on the VISTA child care benefits. What page on the Campus would you direct her to?
   - Benefits of Service: ***www.vistacampus.gov/in-service/benefits-service***

2. A VISTA asks for a reporting tool to use to share her accomplishments with you. What resource on the Campus can she use to report PM data to you?
   - The Impact App: ***www.vistacampus.gov/americorps-vista-impact-app***

3. You oversee a multi-state project and discover that some of your VISTAs in rural areas feel lonely and would like to find other VISTAs in their communities. What tool can they use on the Campus to find other VISTAs and alumni?
   - The VISTA Map: ***www.vistacampus.gov/map***

4. Your members are in their last quarter of service and need to begin thinking about what they will do next. You would like to find some end-of-service talking points to use during your member check-ins. Where do you find them?
   - Transitions Talking Points: ***www.vistacampus.gov/resources/transitions-talking-points***

5. Your member has requested personal leave and you need to review the policy on leave. Where do you find the details about leave?
   - Member Handbook – Chapter 9 Leave Benefits: ***www.vistacampus.gov/chapter-9-leave-benefits***

## Working with sub-sites

1. A sub-site supervisor asks for guidance on how to write a VAD. What resource on the Campus would you direct him to?
   - The VISTA Assignment: ***www.vistacampus.gov/supervisors/vista-assignment***
   - Creating Effective VADs: ***www.vistacampus.gov/resources/creating-effective-vads***

# VISTA Campus Scavenger Hunt Answer Key, cont.

2. You need to develop a training for your sub-site supervisors. Where can you find support materials to do so on the Campus?
   - Working with Sub-sites: ***www.vistacampus.gov/supervisors/working-sub-sites***

3. You want to provide a webinar on coaching and supervision for your sub-site supervisors. What resource could you adapt for your webinar?
   - Successful Member Coaching and Supervision for Sub-site Supervisors: ***www.vistacampus.gov/resources/successful-member-coaching-and-supervision-sub-site-supervisors***

4. What resource outlines the roles, responsibilities and expectations for VISTA supervisors?
   - The Supervisor Manual: ***www.vistacampus.gov/lessons/vista-supervisors-manual***

## Training Resources for you, your team, your organization

1. You would like to show the VISTA Legacy video to your Executive Director and colleagues, so they can know more about the VISTA program. Where do you find the video on the Campus?
   - Under "About VISTA" then under "History and Mission": ***www.vistacampus.gov/about/vista-history-and-mission***

2. You want to point your members and sub-sites to synchronous e-learning opportunities. What is available on the Campus?
   - For members, webinars and the VISTA Blend
   - For sub-sites, webinars
   - Find all opportunities under the "Connect & Learn" tab

3. You need to get up to speed on eGrants, where do you find support?
   - My AmeriCorps and eGrants Support for VISTA Programs: ***www.vistacampus.gov/resources/my-americorps-and-egrants-support-vista-programs***

# VISTA Campus Scavenger Hunt Answer Key, cont.

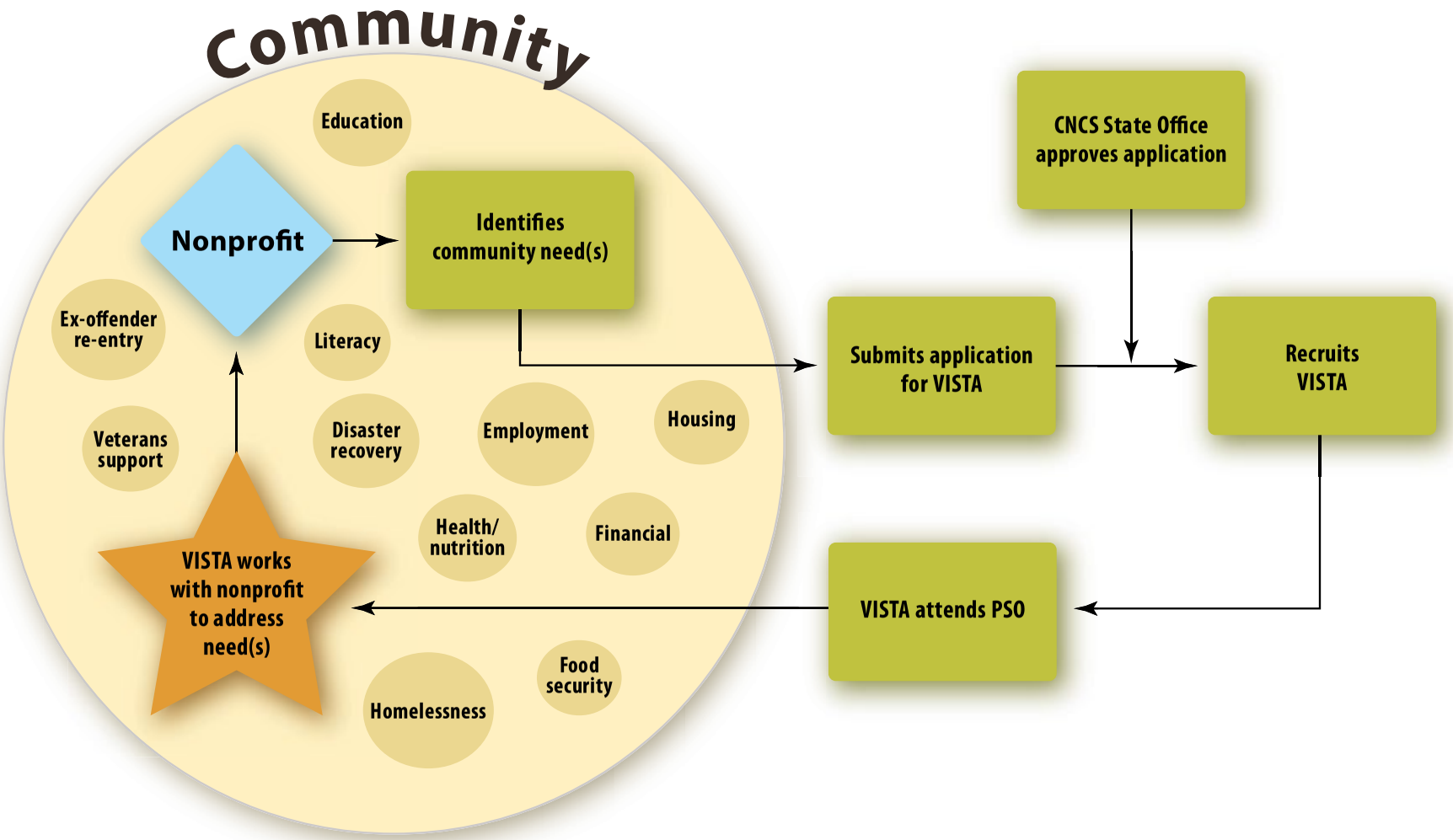
**4.** You heard about the VISTA Leaders Action Learning Challenge resources and want to explore what is available. Where do you find products created by leaders?

- Life as a VISTA, VISTA Leaders, Action Learning, Action Learning Teams Products: ***www.vistacampus.gov/resources/action-learning-team-products***

**5.** You are curious how other supervisors have structured their OSOT. What tool can you use to reach out to other supervisors to find out?

- Connect & Learn, Forums, Supervisor Cafe: ***www.vistacampus.gov/forums/supervisor-cafe-0***

# How a Sponsor Gets a VISTA



# Summary of Key Terms, Conditions & Benefits of VISTA Service

VISTAs must: be **at least 18 years old**; be **US citizens**, **nationals**, or **legal residents**; and successfully complete a **criminal background check** which entails a search of the National Sex Offenders Registry and an FBI criminal history check.

VISTA is a 12-month, **full time commitment**. VISTAs are required to serve an average of 40 hours per week, but may serve in excess of that amount focusing on capacity-building activities. They usually serve within the work hours of their sponsoring organizations, but are expected to be available evenings and weekends to meet the needs of the project and community. A person may **serve up to five terms of service** in any combination of AmeriCorps service programs.

VISTAs receive a **living allowance** (direct deposited every two weeks), **health coverage**, and **10 personal and 10 sick leave days**. Additionally, all VISTAs receive **training and development opportunities** including a Pre-Service Orientation provided by CNCS and an onsite orientation provided by the sponsoring organization.

Based on the circumstances and/or wishes of the individual, a VISTA may receive some additional benefits including a **settling-in allowance** of up to $550 for moving expenses, and **child care allotment** of up to $400 per child, per month. VISTAs can elect to have **life insurance** and are covered by **workers compensation** for service related injuries. Some VISTAs will also benefit from **income exclusion** to continue public assistance they were receiving before joining VISTA. Finally, some VISTAs may be eligible for **tax benefits** such as the Earned Income Credit.

VISTAs can choose to receive either the **Education Award ($5,775)** or an **End-of-Service-Stipend ($1,500)** at the end of their VISTA service. A VISTA can not switch from the stipend to the education award, but can switch from the education award to the stipend before the end of his/her tenth month of service.

If a VISTA selects the **Education Award**, eligible student loans can be put into **forbearance** and have interest accrued during the service year paid by the Trust after the completion of service. The VISTA is responsible for the accrued interest, and must submit the **Interest Accrual Form** to the Trust in order to have the interest paid.

A percentage of Perkins Loan debt can be forgiven if the **End-of-Service Stipend** is selected. **Deferment** may be granted by the lender based on economic hardship. Accrued interest is the responsibility of the VISTA.

When VISTAs satisfactorily complete one full year of service, they earn one year of **non-competitive eligibility (NCE)** status. NCE allows a federal agency to hire an AmeriCorps VISTA alumnus/alumna, who meets the minimum qualifications for a federal job, without going through all the formalities of the competitive process.

VISTAs are allowed **part-time outside employment**; however under no circumstances may a VISTA member be an employee of or contractor for the sponsor or project to which s/he is assigned to serve. Outside employment **must not conflict with project** service or service hours, nor conflict with any applicable law or VISTA program requirements or policies. A VISTA must discuss employment with their supervisor before submitting a job application. The **supervisor must agree** that the outside work will not interfere with the VISTA project. If work does interfere, the VISTA may be asked to either end employment, or end VISTA service.

VISTAs **are allowed to attend class(es)**; however their studies **must not interfere with VISTA responsibilities**. A VISTA must discuss taking class(es) with their supervisor before enrolling. The supervisor needs to agree that studies will not interfere with the VISTA project. If classes do interfere, the VISTA may be asked to either withdraw from the course within one week; or end VISTA service.

**Any political advocacy, organizing, promotion, or demonstration while on VISTA duty, or while PERCEIVED to be on duty, is prohibited.** This includes registering people to vote or driving people to the voting polls, engaging in any pro- or anti-labor organizing activities, lobbying, or taking any action with respect to a partisan or nonpartisan political activity that would result in the identification of the VISTA program with the activity.

VISTA members may **not conduct religious instruction**, engage in proselytizing, or other religious activities **as part of their duties**.

# Hatch Act Limitations on VISTA Political Activities

## Prohibitions on Political & Lobbying Activities

*Updated 6/28/05. Chapter 14: Basic Laws and Federal Regulations in your Member Handbook*

No appropriated funds of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) shall be used to finance, directly or indirectly, any activity designed to influence the outcome of an election to federal, state, or local office or a voter registration activity, or pay the salary of a CNCS employee who engages in such activity.

In addition, VISTA programs are prohibited from using funds or personnel in a matter supporting or resulting in the identification of such programs with partisan or nonpartisan election activities, in voter registration activities, and in providing transportation to the polls. Additionally, no VISTA member or employee of a sponsoring organization may take any action with respect to a partisan or nonpartisan political activity that would result in the identification or apparent identification of the AmeriCorps VISTA program with such activity (see 42 U.S.C. § 5043 for additional restrictions and prohibitions).

VISTA programs also are prohibited from any activity intended to influence the passage or defeat of legislation or proposals by initiative petition (see 42 U.S.C. § 5043 (c) for additional restrictions and prohibitions).

You may participate in political activities allowed under the Hatch Act. The Domestic Volunteer Service Act at 42 U.S.C. § 5055 applies the restrictions of the Hatch Act, Title V, United States Code, Chapter 73, to VISTA members. The Hatch Act applies to you at all times during your service, including off duty hours. Permissible activities under the Hatch Act apply to VISTA members unless these activities are prohibited by other statutory authority when the members are on authorized leave or are not perceived to be performing as a VISTA member (e.g., while not engaged in performing service, or on service time).

You have the right to register and vote as you choose, express opinions about candidates and issues in a nonpublic context, contribute money to political organizations, and attend political meetings. You also may join and be a member of a political party or club, and sign nominating petitions if you do not identify these activities with VISTA or your sponsoring organization.

CNCS regulations that prohibit electoral and lobbying activities are contained in 45 CFR Part 1226 (see Appendix C). The approach of the regulations is twofold: 1) Restrictions on the assignment of VISTA members to, or restrictions on the receipt of CNCS funds by, certain organizations because of the nature of the organizations or their activities; and 2) Restrictions on member assignments and activities.

The organizational restrictions are based on the premise that the assignment of members or the receipt of CNCS funds by certain organizations (regardless of the proposed assignment or activity of the member) is precluded because of the organization's stated purpose or the nature of its activities.

The restrictions on member assignments and activities contain four basic areas of prohibited activities:

1) Electoral; 2) Voter registration, except that programs assisted under this Act may make voter registration information available to the public on the premises of such programs; 3) Voter transportation to the polls; and 4) Efforts of influence legislation. The prohibitions are directed to the use of CNCS funds, the assignments of members, and any other activities supported by CNCS funds.

The Domestic Volunteer Service Act provides two exceptions to the prohibitions on efforts to influence legislation: 1) At the request of a legislative body, committee, or member of a legislative body, and 2) Regarding an authorization or appropriation measure directly affecting the operation of the project or program.

The regulation, found at 45 CFR Part 1226, describes the conditions under which activities pursuant to these exceptions were once undertaken. The regulation also describes the applicability of the restrictions to sponsoring organization employees and the obligations of sponsoring organizations to ensure observance of the regulation. Appropriation laws have restricted these exceptions and activities permitted in 45 CFR Part 1226. Consequently, **you must contact your CNCS State Office before you engage in any political or lobbying activity.**

# Policy on Civil Rights

*Corporation for National & Community Service*

## Civil Rights Statement Regarding Volunteers, Service Participants & Other Beneficiaries

We continue to maintain the policy stated in our June 6, 1994, Civil Rights Statement:

> *Recognizing that the fabric of our society is strengthened by the diversity of its citizens, the policy of the Corporation for National and Community Service is to ensure a mutual respect for all differences among us. Participation in the Corporation and its programs and projects will be based on merit and equal opportunity for all, without regard to factors such as race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, political affiliation, marital or parental status, military service, or religious, community, or social affiliations.*

By adhering to this policy, the Corporation will be able to foster civic responsibility, strengthen the ties that bind us together as a people, and provide educational opportunity for those who make a substantial commitment to service.

This policy applies to programs and projects we conduct, as well as those receiving federal financial assistance from us. For civil rights purposes, all programs and projects funded or receiving volunteers or service participants under the National and Community Service Act, as amended, or the Domestic Volunteer Service Act, as amended, are programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance. Any grantee found to have unlawfully discriminated against a volunteer, service participant, client, employee or beneficiary of such a program or project will be subject to a finding of noncompliance and administrative procedures which may result in termination of federal financial assistance from the Corporation and all other federal agencies.

Any volunteer, service participant, client, employee or beneficiary of a program or project who believes he or she has been subjected to discrimination in violation of nondiscrimination provisions of applicable laws, regulations or this policy may raise his or her concerns with the Corporation's Office of Civil Rights and Inclusiveness. However, discrimination claims not brought to the attention of our Office of Civil Rights and Inclusiveness within 45 days of their occurrence may not be accepted in a formal complaint of discrimination. Our Office of Civil Rights and Inclusiveness may be reached at (202) 606-7503 (voice), (202) 606-3472 (TDD), eo@cns.gov, or through www.nationalservice.org.

The Corporation's Office of Civil Rights and Inclusiveness attempts to resolve concerns about discrimination promptly and, when possible, uses an informal conciliation process to do so. We encourage, but do not require, volunteers, service participants, and other beneficiaries to first bring concerns about discrimination to the director or appropriate personnel of the program or project. We likewise encourage directors of programs and projects to facilitate prompt resolution of these concerns.

Directors of all programs and projects are requested to provide a copy of this policy to all volunteers or service participants.

# Policy on Equal Opportunity

*Corporation for National & Community Service*

## Equal Opportunity & Workforce Diversity Policy for Employees & Applicants for Employment

It is our policy to provide equal employment opportunity for all applicants for employment and employees of the Corporation. We do not discriminate in any aspect of employment because of race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, mental or physical disability (including AIDS), sexual orientation, or any other improper criterion. We strive to provide a work environment free of sexual, racial, national origin, religious or other unlawful harassment.

Equal opportunity for all employees is an integral part of accomplishing the mission of the Corporation. As chief executive officer of the Corporation, I am strongly committed to fostering a workplace that is free of discrimination in any form. I believe that we should be committed to practicing inclusiveness, fairness, and participation of all employees in every facet of the Corporation.

Beyond the basic policies of equal employment and non-discrimination described above, we aspire to provide an environment that is hospitable for all employees. We value diversity among our employees, and I am committed to promoting a climate of mutual respect and appreciation for the strengths that a diverse workforce brings to bear on our important work.

In addition to making certain that our employees are treated with respect and according to the principles of equal opportunity in the workplace, we must make every effort to ensure that our employees, as they carry out their duties, do not discriminate on unlawful grounds against persons or organizations, volunteers or service participants, including subjecting them to any form of unlawful harassment.

I expect every Corporation manager, supervisor, and employee to actively carry out our equal opportunity policy. Implicit in each employee's "successful" performance level is his or her full and complete implementation of this policy. I call upon all managers and supervisors to ensure that all decisions affecting our workforce, service environments, grantees and programs are consistent with the principles of equal opportunity and this policy. Any person who violates this equal opportunity policy will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Any Corporation employee or applicant for employment who believes he or she has been discriminated against in violation of equal opportunity laws, regulations, or this policy, or in retaliation for having participated in an activity protected under these nondiscrimination provisions may raise his or her concerns with our Office of Civil Rights and Inclusiveness. However, discrimination claims not brought to the attention of our Office of Civil Rights and Inclusiveness within 45 days of their occurrence may not be accepted in a formal complaint of discrimination. Our Office of Civil Rights and Inclusiveness may be reached at (202) 606-7503 (voice), (202) 606-3472 (TDD), or eo@cns.gov, or through our Web site at www.nationalservice.org.

# Policy on Harassment

*Corporation for National & Community Service*

## Policy Against Sexual, Racial, National Origin, or Religious Harassment

Our policy is to provide work and service environments free from sexual, racial, national origin, or religious harassment. Whether in Corporation or grantee offices, in other work- or service-related settings such as service sites, training sessions, or site visits, or at work- or service-related social events, such harassment is unacceptable.

Sexual harassment involves unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or any verbal, physical or graphic conduct of a sexual nature when:

1. submission is explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment or service;
2. submission or rejection is a basis for work or service decisions; or
3. such conduct has the purpose or the effect of interfering with work or service performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or service environment.

Slurs and other verbal or physical conduct relating to an individual's race, national origin or religion also constitute harassment when that conduct's purpose or effect is to interfere with work or service performance or create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or service environment.

We expect Corporation and grantee supervisory and management personnel to immediately take appropriate action to prevent or stop any harassment of employees, service participants, or clients of which they become aware, whether the harassing conduct is by employees, service participants, or outside individuals such as service site or contractor personnel. Also, we will not retaliate or tolerate any attempt at retaliation against a person who raises harassment concerns in good faith. Any Corporation employee who violates our policy against harassment, or asserts a false claim of harassment with a malicious intent, will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Any grantee that permits harassment in violation of this policy will be subject to a finding of noncompliance and administrative procedures that may result in termination of federal financial assistance from the Corporation and all other federal agencies.

Persons who believe they have been subjected to harassment in violation of non-harassment provisions of applicable laws, regulations or this policy may raise their concerns with our Office of Civil Rights and Inclusiveness. However, claims of unlawful harassment not brought to the attention of our Office of Civil Rights and Inclusiveness within 45 days of their occurrence may not be accepted in a formal complaint of discrimination. Our Office of Civil Rights and Inclusiveness may be reached at (202) 606-7503 (voice), (202) 606-3472 (TDD), eo@cns.gov, or through our Web site at www.nationalservice.org.

We encourage, but do not require, volunteers, service participants, and other beneficiaries to first bring concerns about harassment to the director or appropriate supervisory personnel of the program or project. We likewise encourage programs and projects to facilitate prompt resolution of these concerns.

Directors of all programs and projects are requested to provide a copy of this policy to all volunteers or service participants.

# Civil Rights & Responsibilities Summary

*You are protected by VISTA and the Corporation for National and Community Service from being subjected to discrimination or harassment. You also have an obligation as a VISTA to make sure you do not subject anyone else to discrimination or harassment. This extends to everyone you come in contact with, including other VISTAs, clients, and volunteers and employees at your service site.*

## What Is Discrimination?

Discrimination is treating people differently because of who they are, where they come from, or the groups they belong to. Discrimination in a VISTA service setting is **illegal** when it targets a person or group based on such **non-merit factors** as race, gender, or religion, also known as **protected classes**.

### Protected Classes

*The Corporation for National and Community Service defines protected classes as the following:*

- Race, color, or national origin
- Sex/gender
- Disability (physical or mental)
- Age
- Religion
- Political affiliation
- Gender identity and expression; or
- Sexual orientation

### Illegal Discrimination

- BOTH targets a person or group because of a difference AND singles them out for different treatment
- May be a one-time occurrence or part of an ongoing pattern
- Can happen to anyone

## What Is Harassment?

Illegal harassment in a VISTA service setting is **severe and/or pervasive** verbal or non-verbal communication relating to an individual's gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, or any other **non-merit factor** that interferes with a VISTA's performance and/or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive service environment. Harassment can consist of spoken or written words, images, or actions and can happen to anyone. It includes but is not limited to:

- Explicit or implicit demands for sexual favors
- Pressure for one's company
- Unwelcome persistent letters, phone calls, emails or other media
- Distribution or display of offensive material
- Offensive looks, gestures, physical encroachment, or threatening behavior

### Illegal Harassment

- Includes—but is not limited to—sexual harassment
- Can be spoken words or unspoken actions
- Is more than just annoying or uncomfortable behavior
- Generally happens over a period of time
- Creates a hostile, intimidating, or offensive service environment
- Prevents a VISTA from serving effectively
- Can happen to anyone

# Civil Rights & Responsibilities Summary, cont.

## What Should I Do?

If you experience or witness discrimination or harassment, and if you feel safe and comfortable doing so, you can approach and talk to the person you suspect of engaging in harassing or discriminating behavior directly yourself. If that doesn't work, or if you do not feel safe and comfortable doing so, you can also talk to your VISTA supervisor.

If you can not go to your supervisor, or you do and the matter is not resolved to your satisfaction, you can contact your State Office (see the link to the list of State Office contacts below). Finally, you can contact the Corporation's Office of Civil Rights and Inclusiveness or OCRI (see contact information below). If you and/or your VISTA supervisor or State Office contact chooses to contact OCRI, note that claims must be made within 45 days of the incident.

## Useful Questions/Suggestions

If you think you have experienced or witnessed Discrimination or Harassment, these questions and suggestions may be useful:

- Have I (Can I) talk to the person involved?
- What assumptions might I be making? How can I check out these assumptions?
- Assume positive intent. Communicate to clarify.
- Use statements such as, "It appears to me that…"
- Speak with a supervisor (if you can).
- Ask yourself: Is there something I can learn from this?

## Where Can I Go for More Information?

The Corporation for National and Community Service takes discrimination and harassment very seriously and makes the following resources available to you:

**Corporation State Office Contacts** A list of State Offices can be found online at **www.nationalservice.gov/about/contact-us/state-offices**.

A complete list of the Corporation's Official Policies on Discrimination and Harassment can be found in the online VISTA Member Handbook at **www.vistacampus.gov/lessons/vista-member-handbook**

**Contact Information**

Office of Civil Rights & Inclusiveness
1201 New York Avenue, NW
Suite 10800
Washington, DC 20525

| | |
|---|---|
| 202-606-7503 | **HOTLINE** |
| 202-606-3472 | **TDD** |
| 202-606-3465 | **FAX** |
| eo@cns.gov | **EMAIL** |

# VISTA Leaders

*VISTA Leaders are former VISTAs who successfully completed a full year of VISTA service and demonstrated exemplary skills and leadership in community service. About 165 VISTA Leaders serve each year throughout the country with projects that support economic opportunity, education, access to food resources and more for economically disadvantaged individuals.*

## 1. Mission of a VISTA Leader

VISTA Leaders support and coordinate larger VISTA projects (involving at least six VISTAs) in their efforts to address the needs of low-income communities. They serve as role models, trainers, and resource providers who strengthen the capacity of VISTAs and VISTA projects. They serve different functions depending on the needs of the local projects, like recruiting and coordinating VISTAs; preparing in-service trainings; identifying new funding sources; and serving as liaisons with the community and the Corporation for National and Community Service.

## 2. Goals of the VISTA Leader Program

- Foster greater communication between VISTAs and their project sponsor, and among VISTAs within a state and a cluster.
- Provide additional support for VISTA members.
- Provide an extended service opportunity for outstanding VISTAs who demonstrate leadership abilities.
- Promote leadership skills in the service and nonprofit field.

## 3. Responsibilities of a VISTA Leader

Specific responsibilities vary, but most VISTA Leaders are involved in developing or expanding a new or existing VISTA project. Leaders help recruit, screen, and train VISTA members. They coordinate VISTAs and develop monitoring, reporting, and project management systems. Leaders promote information sharing; create a VISTA support network; develop in-service training workshops; conduct site visits; and create model programs. Many write grants, fundraise, and conduct broad-based public awareness campaigns. In general, they set an example of leadership for VISTAs: ensure positive relations, facilitate idea sharing, and mediate issues with the community, the project, supervisors, and VISTA members.

## 3. Responsibilities of a VISTA Leader, cont.

VISTA Leaders do not supervise VISTAs (or other CNCS-supported National Service Participants or volunteers). They are prohibited from preparing VISTA project applications or applying for other CNCS grants. They are also prohibited from preparing and submitting progress reports, although they often assist in gathering information from VISTAs and local site supervisors.

## 4. Requesting a VISTA Leader

Corporation State Offices discuss the opportunity to place a VISTA Leader with project sponsors. Coordination and planning should begin as the project is being developed or renewed for another year. Sponsors must request a Leader by including a specific position description in their project application to the State Office. If the need for a Leader develops after the project application has been approved, the assignment description should be submitted to the State Office for approval and the project application should be amended accordingly. The assignment description should also be used as a tool for recruiting.

## 5. Application Process

Once a Leader position is approved, the sponsor creates an opportunity listing for the position in the My AmeriCorps portal. A VISTA who wishes to serve as a Leader must complete and submit an application to that listing through the My AmeriCorps portal. The project sponsor reviews applications, conducts interviews, and selects a final applicant for the Leader position.

# VISTA Leaders, cont.

## 6. Selection of a Leader

VISTA Leaders are carefully selected on the basis of their service performance in VISTA and their ability to communicate well with their peers. They are selected by the project sponsor and approved by the State Office. Only VISTAs who have completed at least one year of VISTA service with strong recommendations, outstanding performance, and demonstrated leadership ability are eligible to serve. VISTA Leaders are placed throughout the year.

## 7. Placement of a Leader

A specific assignment description for each Leader is developed by the project sponsor and submitted to the Corporation State Office. The sponsor reviews applications, conducts interviews (either by telephone or in person) and selects an applicant to serve as Leader. The Corporation State Office places the applicant into the VISTA Leader position.

## 8. Training

VISTA Leaders have three training opportunities during their year: VISTA Leader Orientation, Professional Development Webinars and the Action Learning Challenge. They can also receive one-on-one coaching from the Leader Training Team. Leaders also have access to a large collection of resources devoted to them on the VISTA Campus.

All VISTA Leaders attend the VISTA Leader Orientation, preferably within the first three months of starting their Leader year. The orientation is designed to enhance and reinforce the Leaders' understanding of important leadership capacities and the six VISTA Leader roles — mentor, ambassador, liaison, facilitator & educator, recruiter, and resource developer.

## 8. Training, cont.

After completing the orientation, Leaders can participate in monthly skill-building webinars on topics that enrich their professional and personal growth. Leaders also have the opportunity to apply for an Action Learning Challenge, an immersion-learning model that is designed to enhance professional skills through meeting a significant goal that will positively influence the future of the VISTA program.

To learn more about VISTA Leader training opportunities go to the Leaders area of the VISTA Campus.

## 9. Length of Service

An individual may serve a total of five full-year terms in VISTA. Technically, then, a VISTA Leader could serve a maximum of four years if the individual performed outstandingly and the State Office agrees that it benefits the project.

# Comparison of VISTA Leaders & Supervisor Roles

*Because of their inherent skills and abilities, VISTA Leaders often take on more responsibility or receive more authority than is reasonable or appropriate. Keeping focused and within the limits of the Leader's roles are crucial to the Leader's success. To this end, regular communication between the Supervisor and the Leader is highly effective. It is imperative that VISTAs understand the distinctions between a Supervisor and Leader, and know to whom to turn for what they need. Co-facilitating a discussion with the VISTAs, and perhaps providing a reference sheet about procedures and points of contact are effective methods for Supervisors and Leaders to keep VISTAs informed.*

## *Examples of Appropriate Leader & Supervisor Roles*

| Scenario | Leader Support | Supervisor Contribution |
|---|---|---|
| ***Conducting an On-Site Orientation and Training (OSOT)*** | • Collate orientation materials<br>• Draft agenda<br>• Help secure guests, speakers and facilitators<br>• Participate in implementation of OSOT<br>• Utilize facilitator / educator skills to achieve OSOT activities | • Develop OSOT plan<br>• Finalize agenda<br>• Ensure OSOT plan is submitted to CSO<br>• Help secure guests, speakers and facilitators<br>• Coordinate with Leader regarding OSOT<br>• Implement OSOT |
| ***Recruiting and selecting new VISTAs*** | • Promote position announcement through local venues<br>• Assist in screening applications<br>• Assist in setting up and participate in interviews of top applicants<br>• Provide feedback to supervisor<br>• Utilize VAD in interview process<br>• Utilize recruiting and interview skills to achieve recruiting tasks | • Interview top candidates<br>• Nominate candidates for selection and approval by CSO<br>• Notify candidates of selection and approval<br>• Ensure paperwork is completed<br>• Accept/select candidates in eGrants/Portal<br>• Utilize VAD in interview / selection process |
| ***Facilitating a successful year of service for VISTAs*** | • Make self available to VISTAs as a resource<br>• Listen when VISTAs approach with problems and barriers<br>• Assist VISTAs in identifying their options and creating their own solutions<br>• Assist VISTAs in outlining their options for mediation, including informing supervisor<br>• Involve supervisor if VISTAs cannot resolve issue themselves<br>• Utilize skills as resource generator, mentor, ambassador, and liaison, as appropriate, to ensure a successful year for VISTAs | • Provide ongoing and scheduled supervision to VISTAs<br>• Utilize problem-solving and coaching techniques to help VISTAs resolve problems and barriers<br>• Assist VISTAs in identifying options and solutions<br>• Develop protocol for addressing conflict within group (including the Leader's role)<br>• Schedule appropriate conference time with Leader for updates and feedback |

# Comparison of VISTA Leaders & Supervisor Roles, cont.

## *Examples of Appropriate Leader & Supervisor Roles, cont.*

| Scenario | Leader Support | Supervisor Contribution |
|---|---|---|
| ***A VISTA is habitually late*** | • Ensure VISTAs know and understand policy and procedures for punctuality and project schedule(s)<br>• If pattern persists and supervisor is unaware, communicate problem to supervisor and inform VISTAs of same<br>• Let supervisor know if tardiness of VISTAs is a potential or real divisive issue for team<br>• Utilize educator and liaison skills for achieving this task | • Discuss the reasons for recent tardiness and explore how to improve punctuality with VISTA<br>• Set/re-set timeliness expectations<br>• Determine any organizational measures to be taken to address situation<br>• Notify CSO, if situation merits<br>• Follow-up with VISTA regarding effectiveness of corrective action<br>• Coordinate with Leader as needed regarding VISTA |
| ***Reporting on project performance to CSO*** | • Coordinate collection of data from VISTAs<br>• Clarify points in reports with VISTAs if required<br>• Collate or categorize information<br>• Assist in interpretation of data<br>• Coordinate feedback with supervisor | • Obtain data from Leader<br>• Interpret data<br>• Write report in eGrants<br>• Ensure timeliness of reporting to CSO<br>• Follow-up with Leader and/or VISTAs as necessary |
| ***Developing or refining Volunteer Assignment Description (VAD)*** | • Review VADs for clarity and accuracy<br>• Suggest improvements or changes to supervisor<br>• Clarify action steps for VISTAs when required<br>• Offer feedback to VISTAs and supervisor to determine if tasks appropriately help achieve objectives<br>• Utilize facilitator, educator, mentor skills on an ongoing basis to ensure successful implementation of VAD | • Establish tasks to achieve goal(s)<br>• Write VAD<br>• Review VAD with VISTA on a consistent basis<br>• Monitor achievement of objectives by setting appropriate expectations for progress and completion<br>• Refine VAD as necessary on an ongoing basis<br>• Identify needed feedback from Leader related to VAD progress |

# VISTA Leaders & eGrants Accounts

VISTA Leaders may be given the role of Grantee Recruiter in My AmeriCorps, through eGrants, to support a project sponsor's recruitment activities. For a list of user roles, please visit **www.nationalserviceresources.gov/files/Whats-My-Role-eGrants-My-AmeriCorps-User-Roles-for-VISTA-Programs.pdf**.

In the role of Grantee Recruiter, a VISTA Leader is able to edit service opportunity listings, search for and contact VISTA member candidates, and review applications.

Although the role of Grantee Recruiter allows the user to approve or reject applications, a Leader may not do so. Only a project manager or supervisor may approve or reject applications.

In addition, VISTA Leaders may not access eGrants to work on project-management tasks—progress reports, V-81 approvals, etc.—as this is a project staff function. Under no circumstance can a Leader have "grantee," "grantee administrator," or any other eGrants roles assigned to them. Failure to comply with these provisions by a project sponsor or Leader can lead to project closure.

To hold the role of Grantee Recruiter, the Leader must apply for a separate eGrants account and the Grantee Administrator for the project may then approve the request by assigning the role of Grantee Recruiter to the Leader.

VISTA Leaders may not use their supervisors' accounts and passwords.

Steps to create an eGrants account can be found on pages 6-11 in the My AmeriCorps User Guide: **nationalserviceresources.gov/files/MyAmeriCorps-User-Guide_VISTA-Sponsors-R3_7-24-09_.pdf**

If there are any questions or concerns regarding VISTA Leaders, please contact your State Office or email **vleader@cns.gov**.

# Income Disregard Provision Memo

**DATE:** January 1, 2007
**MEMORANDUM TO:** National Senior Service Corps Staff, VISTA Staff & Corporation State Office Staff
**FROM:** Frank R. Trinity, General Counsel
**SUBJECT:** Senior Companions, Foster Grandparent, Retired and Senior Volunteer and VISTA Programs—Income Disregard Provisions

It continues to come to our attention that state and local governments, and on occasion federal entities, are not properly applying federal law governing the disregard of payments to Senior Companions, Foster Grandparent, Retired and Senior volunteer and VISTA members when determining eligibility for assistance and benefits.

*Section 404 of the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973, as amended, (DVSA), states, in relevant part, as follows:*

> (f )(1) Notwithstanding any other provision of law except as may be provided expressly in limitation of this subsection, payments to volunteers under this Act shall not in any way reduce or eliminate the leave of or eligibility for assistance or services any such volunteers may be receiving under any governmental program, except that this paragraph shall not apply in the case of such payments when the Director determines that the value of all such payments, adjusted to reflect the number of hours such volunteers are serving, is equivalent to or greater than the minimum wage then in effect under the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 (29 U.S.C. § 201 et seq.) or the minimum wage, under the laws of the State where such volunteers are serving, whichever is greater.
>
> (f )(2) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a person enrolled for fulltime service as a volunteer under Title I of this Act who was otherwise entitled to receive assistance or services under any governmental program prior to such volunteer's enrollment shall not be denied such assistance or services because of such volunteer's failure or refusal to register for, seek, or accept employment or training during the period of such service. 42 U.S.C. § 5044 (f )(1) and (2).

In a few cases, government agencies have erroneously attempted to substitute their judgments for the DVSA's authority in determining under (f)(1) if payments to participants are equivalent to or greater than the applicable minimum wage. Only the Corporation for National and Community Service may make this determination, and to date payments to participants under this Title have not been determined to exceed the federal or state minimum wage, whichever is greater.

*Section 418 of the DVSA also states as follows:*

> Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no payment for supportive services or reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses made to persons serving pursuant to Title II of this Act shall be subject to any tax or charge or be treated as wages or compensation for the purposes of unemployment, temporary disability, retirement, public assistance, workers' compensation, or similar benefit payments, or minimum wage laws. This section shall become effective with respect to all payments made after the effective date of this Act [October 1, 1973]. 42 U.S.C. § 5058

In summary, (1) a government program may not consider payments to individuals under the DVSA in determining to reduce or eliminate the individual's level of or eligibility for public assistance or services; (2) entitlements to assistance may not be denied because of a participant's failure or refusal to seek or accept employment or training, including those established for welfare to work programs; and (3) no payments to participants shall be considered wages or unemployment for the purposes of any tax, unemployment, workers' compensation, or for similar benefit payments.

In addition, the legislative history concerning this matter indicates that Congress did not want to damage efforts to recruit participants by reducing or eliminating government assistance for them and placing financial burdens on sponsors of the programs.

This memorandum should be forwarded to anyone with questions concerning this matter. In the event this memorandum does not resolve the issue, please contact this office immediately.

# AmeriCorps VISTA Project Report Supplement

## Background & Purpose

The Corporation for National and Community Service provides the VISTA Progress Report Supplement (VPRS) as an addendum to the regular quarterly progress report required of organizations approved to sponsor a VISTA project. The VPRS is submitted on an annual basis and is intended to cover activities over a single fiscal year, regardless of the individual program year. The VPRS is the vehicle through which projects submit specific data elements needed by the Corporation to report on performance. Corporation personnel will use the reports to track Corporation- and VISTA-specific performance measures on an annual basis.

## Submission Guidelines

All VISTA projects are required to submit the VPRS once per year. The project supervisor should complete the VPRS. AmeriCorps VISTA members should be allowed to review the completed reports, but should not be required to complete the report.

## Reporting Period

All VPRS submissions are due upon completion of the fiscal year. Reporting period covers October 1 through September 30. The due date is October 31.

## Terms & Definitions

See the Performance Measures Guidance for AmeriCorps VISTA for terms and definitions. The terms have very specific definitions and by reporting against any of them, you are indicating that you are in compliance with those definitions.

## Performance Measures: Capacity Building

*Please enter a whole number in those measures applicable to your AmeriCorps VISTA project. You must provide data for at least one measure.*

| |
|---|
| Dollar value of cash resources leveraged by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants |
| Dollar value of in-kind resources leveraged by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants |
| Number of community volunteers recruited by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants |
| Hours of service contributed by community volunteers who were recruited by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants |
| Number of community volunteers managed by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants |
| Hours of service contributed by community volunteers who were managed by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants |
| Number of veterans and military family members engaged in providing services through CNCS-supported programs |
| Number of staff and community volunteers that received training (of one or more types) as a result of capacity-building services provided by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants |
| Number of organizations that received capacity-building services from CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants |
| Number of organizations that completed a community assessment identifying goals and recommendations with the assistance of CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants |

# AmeriCorps VISTA Project Report Supplement, cont.

## Performance Measures: Capacity Building, cont.

Number of organizations implementing three or more effective volunteer management practices as a result of capacity-building services provided by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants

Number of organizations reporting that capacity-building activities provided by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants have helped to make the organization more efficient

Number of organizations reporting that capacity-building activities provided by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants have helped to make the organization more effective

Number of new systems and business processes (technology, performance management, training, etc.) or enhancements to existing systems and business processes put in place as a result of capacity-building services provided by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants

Number of organizations that have experienced an increase in requests for their programs and services as a result of capacity-building services provided by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants

Number of additional activities completed and/or program outputs produced by the program as a result of capacity-building services provided by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants in:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| (a) Disaster Services | (b) Economic Opportunity | (c) Education |
| (d) Environmental Stewardship | (e) Healthy Futures | (f ) Veterans and Military Families |

Number of additional types of services offered by organizations as a result of capacity-building services provided by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants in:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| (a) Disaster Services | (b) Economic Opportunity | (c) Education |
| (d) Environmental Stewardship | (e) Healthy Futures | (f ) Veterans and Military Families |

## Performance Measures: Beneficiaries

*Please enter a whole number for any measure(s) that apply to your project. Please review the Guidance. Not all projects will have data for these measures.*

Number of disadvantaged youth receiving services provided by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants in:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| (a) Disaster Services | (b) Economic Opportunity | (c) Education |
| (d) Environmental Stewardship | (e) Healthy Futures | (f ) Veterans and Military Families |

Number of veterans that received CNCS-supported assistance

Number of veterans' family members that received CNCS-supported assistance

Number of family members of active-duty military that received CNCS-supported assistance

Number of military service members that received CNCS-supported assistance

OMB 3045-0048, 07/31/2014 *Rev. Jan 2012*

# Managing Your VISTA Project: Contacts & Resources

## About us

**Corporation for National & Community Service**
www.nationalservice.gov

**About VISTA**
www.nationalservice.gov/programs/americorps/americorps-vista

## Project Support & Policy

**Your CNCS State Office**
www.nationalservice.gov/about/contact-us/state-offices

**VISTA Member Handbook**
www.vistacampus.gov/lessons/vista-member-handbook

**VISTA Supervisor Manual**
www.vistacampus.gov/lessons/vista-supervisors-manual

**eGrants Resources**
www.vistacampus.gov/supervisors/egrants

**CNCS Office of Inspector General**
- *report fraud, waste or abuse of federal resources*

www.cncsoig.gov or 800-452-8210 or hotline@cncsoig.gov

## Member Support

**My AmeriCorps**
- *recruit VISTAs, complete in-processing forms, apply for education award, and track living allowance and tax statements*

my.americorps.gov

**Service & Inclusion**
- *include people with disabilities in service*

www.serviceandinclusion.org

**VISTA Member Support (VMSU) & National Service Hotline**
- *ask about PSO travel, living allowances, benefits, and emergencies*

questions.nationalservice.gov or 800-942-2677

## Performance Measurement

**AmeriCorps VISTA Performance Measurement**
- *learn CNCS policy related to performance measurement*

www.nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/vista

**AmeriCorps VISTA Impact App**
- *use a data-collection tool for VISTA performance measures*

www.vistacampus.gov/americorps-vista-impact-app

## Training & Professional Development

**VISTA Campus**
- *access interactive tutorials, documents, VISTA map, and discussion forums for VISTA members, leaders, and supervisors*

www.vistacampus.gov

**VISTA 101: Understanding VISTA**
www.vistacampus.gov/resources/vista-101-understanding-vista-0

**National Service Knowledge Networks**
- *locate resources for non-VISTA national service programs*

www.nationalservice.gov/resources

## VISTA Member Benefits

**Healthcare Benefits**
americorpsvista.imglobal.com or 855-851-2974

**Eli Segal AmeriCorps Education Award**
www.nationalservice.gov/resources/edaward

**Child Care Benefit**
www.americorpschildcare.com or 855-886-0687

## Post-Service Resources

**VISTA Alumni**
www.vistacampus.gov/alumni-welcome-and-faq

**AmeriCorps Alums**
www.americorpsalums.org

**What's Next: Life After Service**
- *plan your next move after AmeriCorps*

www.nationalservice.gov/resources/member-and-volunteer-development/whats-next-life-after-your-service-year

## Social Networks

**Facebook**
www.facebook.com/AmeriCorpsVISTA

**Twitter**
twitter.com/vistabuzz

**LinkedIn**
www.linkedin.com/company/americorps-vista

**VISTA Forums**
www.vistacampus.gov/forums

# VISTA Supervisor Webinars

VISTA Supervisor webinars are offered monthly. Recordings are available on demand. Join a session to enhance your knowledge and skills and connect with other VISTA Supervisors.

### Sample Topics

- How to recruit members
- How to train sub-site supervisors
- Supervisor's roles and responsibilities
- Maximize VISTA success and satisfaction

**vistacampus.gov/webinars**

# VISTA Blend (for members)

The VISTA Blend consists of 10-week online courses designed to enhance members' capacity to serve as VISTAs and to help them build a professional skill set.

**Each VISTA Blend student will:**

- Receive individual support and connect with other VISTAs
- Apply course activities and materials to carry out their VAD
- Earn three transferable college credit recommendations

Blend courses are offered three times a year and are available to eligible VISTAs at no cost. Check the VISTA Campus for more information.

### Courses

**Volunteer Mobilization**

- Develop volunteer recruitment strategies
- Create screening and interviewing protocols
- Construct volunteer orientations and trainings

**Resource Development**

- Develop fundraising tools and strategies
- Learn and practice the grant writing process
- Gain knowledge to create and plan fundraising events

**vistacampus.gov/vistablend**

facebook.com/AmeriCorpsVISTA

youtube.com/VISTAoutreach

linkedin.com/company/americorps-vista

meetup.com/VISTA-Meetup

twitter.com/VISTAbuzz

instagram.com/nationalservice

#JoinVISTA