

## Using the VAD at an Onsite Orientation and Training (OSOT)

The goals of OSOT are to establish a supportive environment where the VISTA can have a successful service year. This includes establishing an effective relationship with the supervisor, providing opportunities to learn more about their sponsoring organization, and getting acquainted with the community. For more information, check out the resources available in the Onsite Orientation and Training area of the Supervisor's section of the VISTA Campus.

At Pre-Service Orientation (PSO), VISTAs have the opportunity to review and develop a basic understanding of their VAD. At OSOT, they should dig deeper into their VAD to connect it to the organization and community they'll be serving. To achieve this, OSOT should provide opportunities for the Supervisor and VISTA to:

- Analyze their VADs
  - Ask what they learned at PSO regarding their VAD, and what questions they have about the tasks.
  - Discuss in detail the activities and planned period of work.
  - Discuss how the VISTA's progress in achieving these objectives will be assessed.
  - Discuss performance expectations and process as well as reporting requirements. In particular, highlight the objectives that will be reviewed during the initial period (e.g., the first 90-days).
  - Identify professional development/training needs necessary for the VISTA to be successful.
- Develop a 90-day action plan
  - Identify specific steps, actions, and expectations for the VISTA to focus on during the next 90 days.
  - Schedule training opportunities to support the VISTA in acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge to support those steps as well as ongoing training opportunities.
  - Develop a communication plan or agreements between the VISTA and supervisor (when, how often, focus, etc.). Experienced supervisors recommend reviewing the VAD weekly.

Do not rush these discussions. The VISTA will need time to process the information and connect it to the actualities of the community. Some organizations will provide opportunities for the VISTA to connect with the community after reviewing the project plan and before analyzing their VADs. Strategies for building that community connection include:

- **Independent Community Investigation:** The VISTA spends an afternoon exploring the community and making an inventory of assets, needs and cultural practices. Brief the VISTA before he/she heads out into the community about where to go, what to look for, and how to ensure his or her safety. Explain that the VISTA will be reviewing his or her observations with an expert on the community the following morning.
- **Networking with Partner Organizations:** The VISTA spends the afternoon with one or more partner organizations or other VISTAs and AmeriCorps State/National members involved in this project or related projects.