

What is a VISTA Leader?

What You Should Know as an AmeriCorps VISTA Leader

AmeriCorps VISTA leaders support and help coordinate larger VISTA projects and/or regions, involving at least six VISTA members, in their efforts to address the needs of low-income communities. Leaders serve as recruiters, coordinators, trainers, mentors and resource providers who strengthen the capacity of VISTA members, VISTA projects, and community members. Just as VISTA members work to expand and build the capacity of community projects, leaders work to expand and build the capacity of individual VISTA members and their respective project sites.

AmeriCorps VISTA leaders serve different functions depending on the needs of the local projects. These include recruiting and coordinating VISTA members, preparing VISTAs' in-service training, mentoring and identifying new funding sources.

Goals of the AmeriCorps VISTA Leaders' Program

- Increase VISTA project effectiveness;
- Increase VISTA project sustainability;
- Increase VISTA member effectiveness:
- Increase VISTA recruitment;
- Decrease VISTA attrition;
- Foster greater communications between VISTA members and their sponsoring organizations;
- Facilitate a learning community among VISTA members within a state and region;
- Enhance training for VISTA members;
- Provide an extended service opportunity for VISTA members who demonstrate outstanding leadership skills and abilities; and
- Promote leadership development within the national service field.

Regional vs. Project-Based Leaders

Several states, because of the size and geographic nature of the state, have assigned leaders regionally. Regional leaders serve on a VISTA project and not only support their own project's VISTAs, but also VISTAs on other projects, usually working in a similar issue area. A regional VISTA leader can have a maximum of three projects with up to 15 VISTAs total. Project-based leaders have a minimum of six and maximum of 12 members and their sites are within a 20 mile radius. If there is more than a 20 mile radius, a project could have up to 20 VISTAs.

Some additional criteria for regional leaders are:

- they are being supervised by a single AmeriCorps VISTA supervisor/sponsoring organization;
- all project sponsors involved are in agreement with the proposal; and
- the leader is not operating in a Corporation state staff role.