



# Supporting Your VISTA Members

## Communication Skills, Challenges, and Setting the Tone



Welcome to the next training section of Virtual Leader Orientation: Supporting Your VISTA Members

In the previous training you gained a deeper understanding of supporting your VISTA project and region. This section will build on that understanding by providing you with a foundation of knowledge and skills to help you support your VISTA members. In this training video we'll be discussing communication skills and styles, communication challenges & setting the tone with your VISTAs. **[[Next Slide]]**

# Learning Objectives



- Developing Communication Skills & Style
- Addressing Conflicts
- Setting the Tone for Your Service



By the end of this training you'll know more about:

- **[[Click]]** Communication skills and how you can better understand your communication style
- **[[Click]]** Addressing conflicts & approaching difficult conversations, and
- **[[Click]]** Applying your new communication skills to set the tone with your VISTA members for your Leader year. **[[Next Slide]]**

# Action Items!



## Recommended Prep Work:

- Print a copy of your VLAD

### Sample VISTA Leader Assignment Description (VLAD)

Title: MentorCorps VISTA Leader
Sponsoring Organization: Waketa Community Services (WCS)
Project Name: MentorCorps
Project Number: 12ABCD345
Project Period: 05/04/2013 - 05/03/2014
Site Name (if applicable):
Focus Area(s) Primary: Education Secondary:
Note: <i>If your VAD is not accepted, the State Office will note the reason(s) why here.</i>
<b>VISTA Assignment Objectives and Member Activities</b>
Goal of the Project: 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 of the Assignment (05/04/2013 - 8/31/2013)

Addressing this item before you move forward will help you get the most out of this Virtual Leader Orientation training!

Before we move ahead, let's pause for a second to address an important Action Item:

If you haven't already, please print a copy of your VISTA Leader Assignment Description – also known as a VLAD – and have it nearby. **[[Click]]**

You will need this to complete an activity later in the training. **[[Next slide]]**



## Communication Skills & Style

Developing Your Voice as a VISTA Leader

Our first learning objective is to introduce a few basic communication skills, explore communication styles, and learn how you can develop your voice as a VISTA Leader.

## Communication Overview



Before we get started, let's go back to "The Basics" where you learned about the Six VISTA Leader Roles – The Ambassador, The Mentor, The Recruiter, The Educator or Facilitator, The Liaison & The Resource Generator.

Which of these Roles do you think will benefit from you developing your communication skills?

**[[Click]]** If you guessed all of them...you're right!

Being a better communicator will serve to strengthen your ability to effectively serve in all Six VISTA Leader Roles

Before we dive into discussing VISTA communication, let's take a moment to look at your VISTA Leader Assignment Description, or VLAD. Are any of your assigned activities related to communication with VISTA members? Pause the video here and find out. Then come back to continue the training with a focus on how this information might help you in your particular assignment. **[[Next Slide]]**

# Why Work on Communication?



- Communication is the foundation for relationship building!
- Poor communication can break down relationships
- Communicating is a difficult and complex activity

## Good communication can:

- Build trust & respect
- Keep conversations open, honest & direct

We all communicate every day in a variety of ways – we’re in a constant state of communication whether we’re aware of it or not. So why do we need to work on communication?

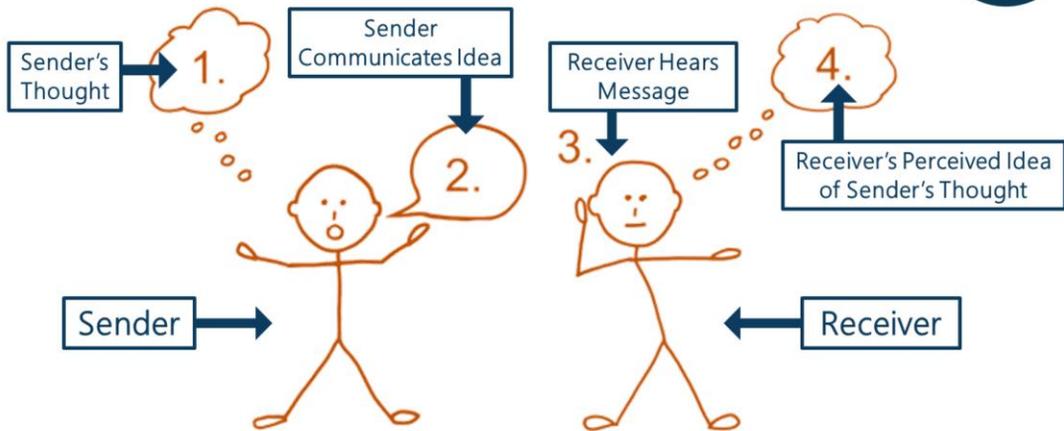
Effective communication has always been critical to the success of AmeriCorps VISTA initiatives – from our start back in the 1960s to today. That’s because communication is the foundation for relationship building, and in VISTA we’re all about building connections and relationships with new partners & communities!

But missteps in communication can also lead to the breakdown of relationships, and sometimes we can be thoughtless or unconscious about what we’re communicating, and the impact of our communication on others. Communication is an ability we too often take for granted or to which we assign little importance.

The reality is that communicating is a difficult and complex activity, and good communication is integral to effective leadership and your service as a VISTA Leader. **[[Click]]** When VISTA Leaders are effective communicators, they build trust and respect through their authenticity. The message this sends, both verbal and nonverbal, to VISTA members and others is permission for them to also be their

authentic selves, which keeps the communication environment open, honest, and direct. **[[Next Slide]]**

# Process of Communication



Communication is a process. Sending information out from ourselves to someone else requires the engagement of both a **[[Click]]** sender and **[[Click]]** receiver in a communication chain.

The sender **[[Click]]** intends to send a particular message, **[[Click]]** communicates this message, and believes that they have sent a particular message and that it was heard as intended. They may or may not ask for feedback to assure the particular message was heard as intended.

Meanwhile, the receiver **[[Click]]** hears a message, **[[Click]]** assigns meaning to the message from their own frame of reference, and thinks they understand the particular message as it was intended by its sender. The receiver may or may not provide feedback that they did or did not understand the particular message as it was intended.

All of these steps, taken together, make up the basic process of communication. But we don't just want to communicate. We want to communicate effectively. **[[Next Slide]]**

# Effective Communication



But what exactly is Effective Communication? It sounds like it should be an instinctive skill. But all too often, when we try to communicate with others something goes wrong.

We say one thing, the other person hears something else, and **[[Click]]** misunderstandings, **[[Click]]** frustration, and **[[Click]]** conflicts can ensue. This can cause problems across all of our relationships both personal and professional, and it can cause problems for you as a VISTA Leader.

So effective communication is about more than just exchanging information. It's also about understanding the emotions and intentions behind the information.

At its core, effective communication combines a set of 4 skills:

1. **[[Click]]** Engaged listening
2. **[[Click]]** Nonverbal communication
3. **[[Click]]** Managing stress in the moment
4. **[[Click]]** Asserting yourself in a respectful way

We'll look at Engaged Listening first **[[Click]]**. When communicating with others, we

often focus on what we should say. However, effective communication is less about talking and more about listening. Listening well means not just understanding the words or the information being communicated, but also understanding the emotions the speaker is trying to communicate. When you really listen—when you’re engaged with what’s being said—you’ll hear the subtle intonations in someone’s voice that tell you how that person is feeling and the emotions they’re trying to communicate. When you’re an engaged listener, not only will you better understand the other person, you’ll also make that person feel heard and understood, which can help build a stronger, deeper connection between you.

Moving onto non-verbal communication. **[[Click]]** The way you look, listen, move, and react to another person tells them more about how you’re feeling than words alone ever can. Nonverbal communication, or body language, includes facial expressions, body movement and gestures, eye contact, posture, the tone of your voice, and even your muscle tension and breathing. Developing the ability to understand and use nonverbal communication can help you connect with others, express what you really mean, navigate challenging situations, and build better relationships.

- You can enhance effective communication by using open body language. Some examples of open body language are arms uncrossed, standing with an open stance, or sitting on the edge of your seat, and maintaining eye contact with the person you’re talking to.

What do we mean by Managing Stress in the Moment? **[[Click]]** Managing stress in effective communication is directly connected to engaged listening. If the person you’re talking to is calm, for example, listening in an engaged way will help to calm you, too. Similarly, if the person is agitated, you can help calm them by listening in an attentive way and making the person feel understood.

Finally we come to Asserting Yourself with Respect. **[[Click]]** Direct, assertive expression makes for clear communication and can help boost your self-esteem and decision-making. Being assertive means expressing your thoughts, feelings, and needs in an open and honest way, while standing up for yourself and respecting others. It does NOT mean being hostile, aggressive, or demanding.

Remember, **[[Click]]** effective communication is always about understanding the other person, not about winning an argument or forcing your opinions on others.  
**[[Next Slide]]**

# 8 Steps to Communication



## Sender

- 1) I intend to send a particular message.
- 2) I communicate the message.
- 3) I believe I sent the particular message I intended and the particular message was heard as intended.
- 4) I may or may not ask for feedback to assure the particular message was heard as intended.



## Receiver

- 5) I heard a message.
- 6) I assign meaning to the message from my own frame of reference.
- 7) I think I understand the particular message as intended.
- 8) I may or may not provide feedback that I did or did not understand the particular message as intended.

Now that you have a better understanding of what it takes to communicate effectively, **[[Click]]** let's go back to the process of communication **[[Click]]** which can be divided into eight steps.

These eight steps come into play every time information is exchanged, and they can happen dozens of times during a conversation. While you're trying to use the four skills of effective communication, remember that at any point along these many information exchanges, there could be a failure to send or hear the particular message as it was intended.

This failure to send or hear the intended message is caused by barriers that challenge good communication, and the ability to understand and manage these barriers is a key piece of effective communication. **[[Next Slide]]**

# Communication Barriers



## Fear or Self-Protection

Fear of disapproval, rejection, criticism, being seen as wrong, being told "no," or of being discounted, etc.

Remain self-aware & be open to understanding the other person.

Ensure that you are both being heard & hearing correctly.

Establish what you both need to feel respected in the situation.

## A Lack of Self-Awareness

A lack of self-awareness about the communication patterns we may use. Examples: "Placater" and "Blamer"

Take a moment and pause

Reflect on your personality traits

Understand your communication style

Don't judge yourself; remain neutral

## Weak Feedback Systems

Provides an opportunity to communicate understanding & seek clarification of the information shared.

Create a communication system

How will you communicate?

Who will you communicate too?

How often will communication occur?

What is the preferred method for providing communication feedback?

There are a lot of potential barriers to effective communication. In this training we'll discuss three common things that can stand in the way of communication effectively.

The first possible barrier to communication is that the person communicating is experiencing fear **[[Click]]**, or wants to protect themselves. Fear is a critical barrier to effective communication. Many of us devise elaborate communication patterns to protect ourselves from disapproval, rejection, criticism, being seen as wrong, being told "no," or of being discounted, etc. We develop these communication patterns to address our fear of these things over time depending on our own personal experiences – they make us feel more secure when we communicate. Fear also contributes to poor listening skills which is another primary barrier to effective communication. Poor listening leads to misinformation, confusion, contradictions, unnecessary disagreements, misinterpretation, and poor problem-solving and decision-making processes. So what can we do to limit the impact of fear on our communication? If you find yourself having difficulty communicating because of fear:

- Remain self-aware and open to understanding the other person
- Ensure that your message is being heard correctly & that you are hearing the other person directly

- Establish what you and the other person both need in order to feel respected in the situation

We just discussed how fear can create complex communication patterns. These patterns can be their own barrier to communication if we **[[Click]]** lack awareness of how they may be impacting us. The two most dominant patterns are the placater and blamer.

Placaters might be seen as a “yes” people, and be prone to burnout because they allow themselves to be taken advantage of. Some placating patterns include: saying yes when you really want to say no; avoiding difficult conversations, withdrawing, and masking.

Blamers, on the other hand, possess the same or similar fear as placaters, but instead, they keep people at a distance by dominating communication and blaming others when things go wrong or mistakes are made. They may engage in labeling behaviors, criticism of others, controlling behaviors, or when feeling high fear, attacking or aggressive behaviors, such as shouting, name calling, put-downs.

For both placaters and blamers conflict is difficult and they exhibit their unique communication pattern as a way to hide their fear and prevent the conflict from occurring. So what can you do if you think your communication pattern might be creating a barrier to effective communication?

- Take a moment & pause
- Reflect on your personality traits and how they might impact your communication
- Try to understand what communication style you’re using & how you might change it to improve communication
- Most importantly, don’t judge yourself during this process. Effective communication is a learned skill, it takes a lot of practice, and we’re all trying to become better communicators together!

The third barrier to effective communication is **[[Click]]** weak or non-existent feedback systems. Feedback provides an opportunity to communicate understanding of the information shared, whether the communication was appropriate, and whether the message/information needs to be clarified, etc. Not having a strong feedback system can increase the likelihood of miscommunication. Increasing the level of organization around how information will be communicated, to whom the information will be provided, how often, and what the feedback process will be, can significantly increase the likelihood of effective communication.

As we said earlier, there are many other barriers to communication; however, those

identified above are some key items that can be addressed to build your effective communication skills. **[[Next Slide]]**



### Make a Communication “To-Do” List:

1. What activities have you been assigned that will require you to be an effective communicator?
2. What kind of communication might be most effective for those activities?
3. Do you need to develop any new communication skills to be effective in those assignment?
4. Where might you find the resources to develop those new skills?

Let’s pause for a quick activity. Take a look at your VISTA Leader Assignment Description (VLAD), and consider these four questions:

1. What activities have you been assigned that will require you to be an effective communicator?
2. What kind of communication might be most effective for those activities?
3. Do you need to develop any new communication skills to be effective in those assignments?
4. Where might you find the resources to develop those new skills?

Pause the training here for a moment & make a quick “Communication To-Do” list based on these questions and your VLAD. Come back and restart the video when you’re ready.

There are a lot of resources available on the VISTA Campus, at your organization & on the internet that can help you make progress on your Communication To-Do List. We recommend starting with the “Communication: The Core of Leading Effectively” resource linked below this training which will expand on the topics covered in this training. **[[Next Slide]]**

# Keys to Good Communication



Seek 1<sup>st</sup> to Understand  
Then to be understood

Don't make assumptions

Allow others to act authentically without it affecting you

Be willing to change: assumptions & biases

Increase your self-awareness

Find common ground

Be authentic.

Give yourself permission to make mistakes

Become comfortable with the uncomfortable

It's important to remember that no one becomes a 100% effective communicator overnight, and we all always have room to grow. Your VISTA Leader year is a great opportunity to learn more about yourself as a communicator and how you might change your communication style to become more effective. Before we move onto the next topic let's consider some quick keys to good communication.

-**[[Click]]** Seek first to understand, and then to be understood. In other words, listen first, and talk second. This habit is the key to communication and having power and influence with people, because the deepest need of the human heart is to be understood. Everyone wants to be respected and valued for who they are. People won't share their deepest feelings unless they feel genuine love and understanding.

-**[[Click]]** Increase your self-awareness. It is important to be aware of who you are, what your motivations, emotions, and beliefs are as you communicate with others so that you can filter and interpret messages through the noise that are your thoughts and being. Self-awareness allows for listening that is free of assumptions and judgments that compromise healthy communication.

-**[[Click]]** Become comfortable with the uncomfortable. This means being at peace

with a "no" response, being disagreed with or criticized, and strong emotional responses by either yourself or from others.

-**[[Click]]** Allow others to act authentically without it affecting you. In other words, don't succumb to the social pressure to conform to those around you. This tendency to conform is often subconscious and more of a reflex reaction. Though most of us like the idea of being true to ourselves, in the moment we often "go along to get along" and conform to what others are doing. This is a tortured situation because our identity shifts from being our authentic self to being what everyone else wants us to be. It moves us away from developing a deep sense of who we are and what we have to offer.

-**[[Click]]** Be willing to change your own assumptions, judgments, and biases. We are often unaware or unwilling to admit to making assumptions, judgments, and having biases. But no person is immune from these. No matter how smart or well-intentioned you may be, you cannot eliminate assumptions, judgments, and biases from your life. Simply recognizing the ways our thinking can be flawed, however, helps us to make more informed and rational decisions.

-**[[Click]]** Give yourself permission to make mistakes; do not judge yourself. Everyone makes mistakes and often times they are the best teacher. Practice kindness, understanding, and compassion towards yourself.

- **[[Click]]** Find common ground. This doesn't mean finding absolute agreement, but rather shareable ground whose boundaries are marked by a range of actions that all can live with. Compromise = giving 60% and expecting 40%.

- **[[Click]]** Don't make assumptions. We all have our own frame, or lens, through which we see the world. While our own frame makes sense to us – it may not be obvious to others. Similarly, we may struggle to see the world through someone else's frame. These frames can cause us to make assumptions, but being a good communicator means working with others to understand their view & not jump to conclusions.

- **[[Click]]** Be authentic. For real relationships and good communication, it's important to truly listen and authentically be interested in the other person.

And the final key to effective communication is to keep learning! So after you finish this training, and throughout your leader service year, be sure to check out the communication resources linked below this video. They include:

- Communication: The Core of Leading Effectively, which provides an introduction

communicating effectively, and how communication is a key aspect of successful leadership.

- A Communication Styles Assessment created by former VISTA Leaders!
- Styles of Communication; a quick introduction to communication styles, and some of the beliefs that are most important to each type of communicator, and the
- “Assertive Communication that Establishes Your Credibility” webinar which explores types of interpersonal communication and provides tips on using assertive communication to address common challenges in the professional workplace. **[[Next Slide]]**



## Conflict Management

An Introduction to Addressing Conflict & Difficult Conversations

Now that you have a better idea about how you might become a more effective communicator as a VISTA Leader, let's take a few minutes to discuss the skills you'll need to address something all VISTA Leaders encounter at some point during their service year: Conflict. **[[Next Slide]]**

# Conflict Management Overview



## Leader Conflict Management Activities

- Address conflicts between VISTAs
- Guidance on conflicts with Supervisors
- Share conflict management strategies

When conflict is mentioned many people might become anxious, much preferring to avoid it if possible. However, it's necessary to recognize that conflict is completely natural, normal, and can even be a healthy component of personal & professional relationships. Conflict is an expression of individual's needs, and relationships can be improved & problems addressed when everyone's needs are clearer. It's important to be proactive in addressing conflicts that impact the ability of yourself or your VISTA members to serve effectively.

Going back to "The Basics" where you learned about the Six VISTA Leader Roles – The Ambassador, The Mentor, The Recruiter, The Educator or Facilitator, The Liaison & The Resource Generator. Which roles do you think will require you to exercise your conflict management skills most?

**[[Click]]** The Mentor; As a Leader, your VISTA members may have conflicts with their supervisors, other VISTA members, or with you. It's important to be available to your members as a guide through conflicts they may be experiencing at their service sites.

**[[Click]]** The Liaison; because of your unique position as a person who is in communication with multiple key players in your VISTA project, you may be called

upon to manage, or help manage, conflicts that occur between these individuals.

As a VISTA Leader in these roles you might:

- Address conflicts that may arise between VISTA members serving at the same site
- Provide guidance to VISTAs who may be working through a conflict with their Supervisor, or
- Share conflict management strategies with your VISTA members who may be managing conflicts between their own project partners. **[[Next Slide]]**

# Addressing Conflict



## Goal #1

Clearly & respectfully represent each point of view.

## Goal #2

Respectfully & attentively hear each point of view.

## Goal #3

Find a solution that addresses needs & respects boundaries.

**NOT a Goal: Changing the other person's mind.**

Conflict management is a complex skill that requires practice, a high level of self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and self-knowledge. The information in this training is intended only as a brief introduction to some key conflict management practices you may find helpful.

Any approach to managing conflict requires that **[[Click]]** each individual clearly and respectfully represent his or her point of view, and **[[Click]]** be willing to hear the other person's point of view. Your goal going into conflict management **[[Click]]** should never be trying to change the other person's mind – your goal is to **[[Click]]** find a solution that addresses the needs of both parties while respecting individual boundaries. **[[Next Slide]]**

## Best Practices for Approaching Conflict



1. Address the problem early
2. Discuss the issue directly
3. Communicate with respect
4. Seek to understand the other person's point-of-view
5. Address perceptions and assumptions
6. Listen to understand the interests of the other party
7. Focus on the issue, not the person
8. Find ways to move past your differences

**Remember! You don't need to come away from conflict management with the same opinions. The goal is a solution!**

Instead of avoiding conflict and difficult conversations, as a VISTA Leader it's important to build the skills and empathy to confront people in a constructive way. With the goals of addressing conflict that we just discussed in mind, here are some best practices for approaching conflict & difficult conversations:

1. To address the problem early. The more you delay the more difficult the conversation will become;
2. Discuss the issue directly. Be clear about the reason for your conversation
3. Communicate with respect to all parties involved;
4. Seek to learn and understand the other's point-of-view. Take the time to "walk in their shoes" and try to understand why and how they think and feel a certain way;
5. Address perceptions and assumptions that both parties may have about the other or the problem.
6. Listen to understand the interests of the other party, not just their position on the issue. What are their needs?
7. Focus on the issue, not the person.
8. Find collaborative ways to move past your differences.

**[[Click]]** Remember! You don't need to come away from conflict management with

the same opinions. The goal is a solution! **[[Next Slide]]**

## When To Involve Your Supervisor



Your attempt to resolve a conflict between two VISTA members has been unsuccessful.

When a conflict is leading to project non-compliance, or unallowable activities being performed by VISTA members.

When a VISTA member has come to you concerning a conflict with their supervisor, and they want to address the issue with their supervisor.

When you have concerns that a conflict is having a negative impact on a VISTA member's physical or mental health.

Avoiding difficult conversations can have a negative impact on your VISTA team and the success of your VISTA project as a whole. That's why developing your conflict management skills can be an important aspect of your VISTA Leader year. However, don't forget that when VISTA conflicts rise above a level that is appropriate for VISTA Leaders to manage you must involve your Supervisor or Project Director. Here are a few scenarios where it's important to involve your supervisor.

- **[[Click]]** Your attempt to resolve a conflict between two VISTA members has been unsuccessful.
- **[[click]]** When a conflict is leading to project non-compliance, or unallowable activities being performed by VISTA members.
- **[[Click]]** When a VISTA member has come to you concerning a conflict with their supervisor, and they want to address the issue with their supervisor. Only your supervisor or project direct should reach out to another VISTA supervisor concerning a conflict.

- **[[Click]]** When you have concerns that a conflict is having a negative impact on a VISTA member's physical or mental health.

Remember, as a VISTA Leader who is both a mentor and liaison, you have a great capacity to help your members address difficult conversations & manage conflict, but it's important to bring in reinforcements – in the form of your Supervisor or Project Director - before things get out of hand! **[[Next Slide]]**

## Two Quick Tips & Additional Resources



"THE SECRET OF CHANGE IS TO FOCUS ALL OF YOUR ENERGY, NOT ON FIGHTING THE OLD, BUT ON BUILDING THE NEW."

— SOCRATES

- Consider approaching a difficult conversation from a helping perspective instead of a direct confrontation.
- Sometimes difficult conversations are easier to stomach as a "bad news sandwich."

Here are a few other quick tips for managing difficult conversations:

- **[[Click]]** No one really likes to be confronted, but most appreciate being helped. Depending on the situation – consider engaging in a conversation aimed at helping instead. Start by putting yourself in the other person's shoes to understand where they are coming from. This will help with the delivery and receipt of your honest feedback.
- **[[Click]]** Sometimes difficult conversations are easier to stomach as a "bad news sandwich" - where bad news is shared in between good news. This can be particularly helpful for difficult conversations with VISTA members. Coming into a difficult conversation with some examples of recent successes and strengths of your VISTA is always a good idea.

Before we move onto the next topic – don't forget to review two great conflict management resources linked below this video!

- "Managing Conflict: A Resource Guide for VISTAs & Leaders" is a comprehensive, thorough, and approachable resource for managing conflict created by former VISTA Leaders, and

- The “Helping VISTAs Address Conflict V-Cast” is an easy and quick guide to addressing conflict for VISTA Leaders. **[[Next Slide]]**



## Setting the Tone

### Introducing Yourself to Your VISTA Members

So far we've covered some introductory information about communication skills, communication styles, and communicating through conflict. In the final section of this training we'll discuss how you can start applying this information to set the tone and establish a relationship with your VISTA members. **[[Next Slide]]**

# Connecting with Your VISTA Members



- VISTA leaders wear many “hats”
- Keys items to communicate:
  - What is your role?
    - You’re a resource – how can you help!
  - What should they expect from you?
  - What do you expect from them?
  - Recurring due dates?
  - Recurring meeting dates?
  - How can they contact you?
- How will you reach out to your members for the first time?



First impressions are important! So let’s talk about some of the key considerations when you connect with your VISTA members for the first time.

First and foremost we need to address the fact that VISTA Leaders wear many “hats.” As we’ve said before the “Roles” of VISTA Leaders are varied and it’s up to you to find the balance between mentor, friend, confidant, colleague & leader with your VISTA members. You may be in the peer group of your members, or you may be in a different generation entirely. You may have previously served with your members as a VISTA on the same project, or you may be brand new to an established team.

Before you reach out to your VISTA members for the first time as their VISTA Leader be sure you’ve established how you plan on striking that balance, and how you want your VISTA members to perceive you. This decision will depend on – the activities you’ve been assigned, your communication style & whether you’ll be leading your VISTA members mostly in-person or via remote communication like e-mail, calls & video chats.

Once you decide the tone of your communication, what are the key things you need to communicate? We recommend addressing the following questions:

- **[[Click]]** What is your role? You're a resource. You want your VISTA members to know you're there to help!
- **[[Click]]** What should they expect from you?
- **[[Click]]** What do you expect from them?
- **[[Click]]** Are there any recurring due dates or recurring meeting dates that they need to be aware of quickly?
- **[[Click]]** How can they contact you & what is your preferred method of communication?

And the final consideration is; how will you reach out to your members for the first time? Will you...

- Hold a meeting?
- Send an introductory e-mail?
- Visit their site?
- Have a phone call?

Again, this will largely depend on your communication style or preferences, and the physical location of your VISTA team. **[[Next Slide]]**

# Survey Your Members



- What motivates them to serve?
- What are they looking to learn?
- What are their personal and professional interests?
- What skills are they trying to build?
- What are their strengths?
- How do they feel they can best contribute to the community?
- How would they like to engage with the local VISTA community?
- What commitments do they have outside of VISTA service?
- How can you best support them?
- How often do they want to communicate with you?
- How do they want to communicate with you?



Setting the tone with your VISTA members isn't just about telling them about yourself, it's also about getting to know them better! A survey is an easy and useful tool for establishing a base of knowledge about all of your members. Here are eleven questions to get you started. You can always add or remove any of them as best suits your project. You might distribute the survey via a WORD document, an on-line survey, or a shared document file.

- **[[Click]]** What motivates them to serve as VISTAs?
- **[[Click]]** What are they looking to learn from their service experience?
- **[[Click]]** What are their personal and professional interests?
- **[[Click]]** What skills are they trying to build and/or work on?
- **[[Click]]** What are their strengths?
- **[[Click]]** How do they feel they can best contribute to the community?
- **[[Click]]** How much or how little would they like to engage with the local VISTA community?
- **[[Click]]** What commitments do they have outside of VISTA service?
- **[[Click]]** How can you best support them throughout their various stages of service?
- **[[Click]]** How often do they want to communicate with you?
- **[[Click]]** How do they want to communicate with you? Phone? Email? In-Person? A

combination? **[[Next Slide]]**

## Map Out Your VISTA Leader Year



- What ways can you best support your members? Will you...
  - Create weekly/monthly VISTA newsletters?
  - Facilitate monthly/quarterly VISTA professional development trainings?
  - Coordinate VISTA social events?
  - Carry-out monthly VISTA check-ins?
- There is no one right way to be a VISTA leader – *Be Creative!*
- Develop a schedule, but remember that it can be changed
- Bring your supervisor into the discussion

And while you're surveying your members don't forget to survey yourself. Make sure you know your answers to those eleven questions as well – they can be a great starting point for mapping out your Leader service year. Here are some other important questions you can ask yourself as you get started.

**[[Click]]** What ways can you best support your members? Will you...

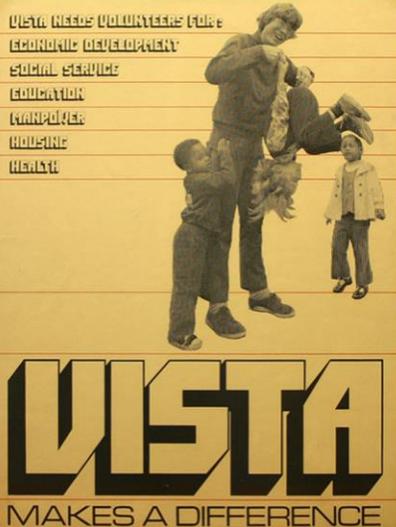
- Create weekly/monthly VISTA newsletters?
- Facilitate monthly/quarterly VISTA professional development trainings?
- Coordinate VISTA social events?
- Carry-out monthly VISTA check-ins?

**[[Click]]** There is no one right way to be a VISTA Leader! Consider your members' needs and your personal interests to develop your own Leader style. Be creative and experiment to see what balance works best for you and your members.

**[[Click]]** Once you've established what works, develop a schedule, but know this can always be adjusted as you move through your service year and new members come onboard. **[[Click]]** Connect with your supervisor to discuss this schedule to keep them informed, get their input, and discuss how they can best support you in meeting your

goals. **[[Next Slide**

## Let's Review!



- Developing Communication Skills & Style
- Addressing Conflicts
- Setting the Tone for Your Service

Let's review what you've learned in this training. You now know more about:

- **[[Click]]** Communication skills, styles & what you can do to better understand and develop yours,
- **[[Click]]** Skills you can use to address conflicts & approach difficult conversations, and
- **[[Click]]** How you can apply your new communication skills to setting the tone with your VISTA members for your Leader year.

These new skills are a solid foundation for starting to build a strong member support network! **[[Next Slide]]**

## Up Next!



Up next we'll be expanding on the topics of member check-ins, VISTA communications, and facilitating trainings and events.

Once you're ready to move on to the next topic scroll down to "Connecting & Engaging Your Members"

Remember you can always come back to this video, reference the slides in the PDF version linked below, and use the other resources in this section whenever you need them!