



Turning Your Attention to  
VISTA Member Retention

 **VISTA**  
Volunteers in Service to America

Dial: 877-853-5257  
Webinar ID: 996-1208-0047

 CORPORATION FOR  
NATIONAL &  
COMMUNITY  
SERVICE

1

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Welcome!

Dial: 866-804-5824  
ID: 996-1208-0047



**Eric Powell**  
AmeriCorps VISTA  
Training Specialist  
Washington, D.C.  
VISTA Alum '06-'07  
VISTA Leader Alum '08-'09

 CORPORATION FOR  
NATIONAL &  
COMMUNITY  
SERVICE

 25  
YEARS OF  
NATIONAL  
SERVICE

 **VISTA**  
Volunteers in Service to America

2

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Session Goals

Dial: 866-804-5824  
ID: 996-1208-0047

By the end of the webinar, you will be able to:

- Understand some basic elements of member retention
- Develop ways to inspire and motivate your members
- Begin planning for retention and get feedback from your members
- Know where to access resources and support

3

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Today's Agenda

Dial: 866-804-5824  
ID: 996-1208-0047



- What is retention?
- Retention Challenges
- Examples of Retention Activities
- Resources on Retention
- Next Steps and Evaluation
- Next Webinar
- Q&A



4

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Guest Speakers

Dial: 866-804-5824  
ID: 996-1208-0047



**Laura Martin**  
McLean Institute for Public Service and  
Community Engagement  
University of Mississippi  
Associate Director  
University, MS



**Jamie Rich**  
For Inspiration and Recognition of  
Science and Technology (FIRST)  
VISTA Specialist  
Manchester, NH

5

---

---

---

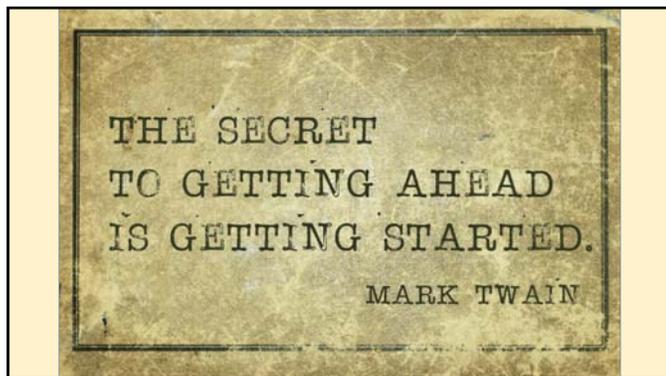
---

---

---

---

---



6

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# What is retention?

Dial: 866-804-5824  
ID: 996-1208-0047



- Not an activity; it is an output resulting from other activities
- Ongoing process
- Actively listening and taking action, not passively hoping all is well
- Keeping individuals inspired, involved, and integrated in the program



7

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Retention Challenges

Dial: 866-804-5824  
ID: 996-1208-0047



8

---

---

---

---

---

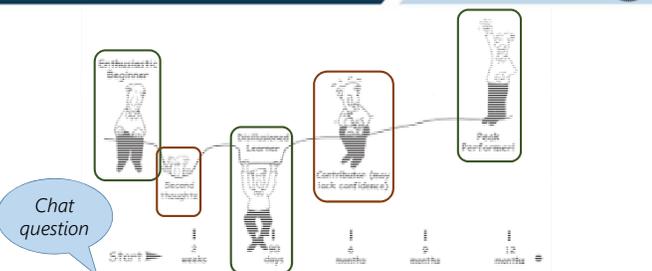
---

---

---

# VISTA Member Lifecycle

Dial: 866-804-5824  
ID: 996-1208-0047



9

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Retention Challenges

Dial: 866-804-5824  
ID: 996-1208-0047



- This is my VISTA member's first time in a full-time professional setting and they seem uncomfortable.
- My VISTA member seems unmotivated.
- Several of our VISTA members ended their service early.
- Our VISTA member feels isolated and that no one understands the VISTA program or what our VISTA member does.
- My supervisor does not listen to me.
- My supervisor is rarely available.
- Our VISTA member does not feel valued or appreciated.



10

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Where Retention Begins

Dial: 866-804-5824  
ID: 996-1208-0047



Retention:

Begins:	Is Not Just:	Includes:	Continues:
When an applicant first submits an application to your VISTA project	Retention of currently serving members	Retaining applicants through the application and recruitment process, which makes retaining members easier	Through the recruitment process and through starting service all the way until the end of service



11

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Poll Activity

Dial: 866-804-5824  
ID: 996-1208-0047



- When do your VISTA members typically early terminate?



12

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## You do a lot of work!

Dial: 866-804-5824  
ID: 996-1208-0047



- Focus a lot of energy on planning
- Spend a lot of time on recruitment
- Invest a lot of time in creating Service Opportunity Listings
- Dedicate a lot of time to writing the VISTA Assignment Description
- Devote a lot of time to marketing and outreach
- Allocate a lot of time to screening and interviewing
- Take a lot of time to select and prepare applicant for service
- Put in a lot of time trying to find well-qualified applicants

13

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



14

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Retention Examples

Dial: 866-804-5824  
ID: 996-1208-0047



15

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Retention of Applicants

Dial: 866-804-5824  
ID: 996-1208-0047



- Contact selected applicants weekly
  - Each week highlight something different (e.g., community history and leaders, poverty statistics, VISTA Assignment Description, organizational culture, things to do in the area, etc.)
  - One week, connect them with a currently-serving member or recent VISTA alumnus/a who can tell their story and inspire the applicant
  - After the interview and prior to first day of service, consider a phone or video call one week to make them feel welcome
- Be energetic and show them that you really are excited for them
- Send them date, time, location where to report, along with contact information for someone if they have questions

16

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Retention of Members

Dial: 866-804-5824  
ID: 996-1208-0047



17

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Example 1 – Communication

Dial: 866-804-5824  
ID: 996-1208-0047



- Communicate effectively with the VISTA member
  - Regular, rarely missed, weekly meetings
  - Be available and be present, but don't hover or inundate
  - Ask how they like to receive feedback
  - Ask how they communicate and how they like to receive communication
  - Keep them informed and involve them in organizational activities
- Invite initiative and innovation
  - Encourage the VISTA member to set the agenda for one-on-one meetings with supervisor
  - Urge creativity to spark the VISTA's passion within the role and VISTA Assignment Description

18

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Example 1 – Communication

Dial: 866-804-5824  
ID: 996-1208-0047



- Communicate effectively inside and outside the organization
  - Fully introduce VISTA member to staff; explain what VISTA is
  - Give credit when VISTA members contribute to or fully complete tasks
  - Talk about VISTA within the organization in meetings, on break, etc.
  - Have the VISTA display the VISTA logo outside and on their desk
  - Mention your VISTA member in press releases and social media posts
- Spotlight the VISTA role at your organization
  - Provide a dedicated VISTA update in staff meeting agendas
  - Highlight VISTA-related events on shared calendars



19

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Example 2 – Know Members

Dial: 866-804-5824  
ID: 996-1208-0047



- Get to know VISTA members and their interests
  - What is their favorite fun activity? What makes them nervous?  
What do they feel that they need to succeed? Ask open-ended questions
  - Incorporate their interests into your conversations and activities
  - Be a coaching supervisor; be kind and firm; offer suggestions
  - Learn what brought them to VISTA and what their passions are
  - Make it a mutual relationship; tell them about yourself
- Invest in the relationship
  - Offer professional development opportunities to help the VISTA complete their VISTA Assignment Description duties and to prepare for life after VISTA
  - Help the VISTA understand how their efforts contribute to a larger mission
  - VISTAs: Future board members, donors, and lifelong champions of your work



20

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Example 2 – Know Members

Dial: 866-804-5824  
ID: 996-1208-0047



- Get to know VISTA members and their skills and interests
  - May be staff, board members, community members, volunteers, etc.
  - Connections could be personal and/or professional
  - Can help VISTA members better succeed at accomplishing their tasks and achieving their goals after their year of VISTA service
  - Consider small group meetings in-person or virtually, and give each person a few minutes to talk about who they are, what they love to do, and how they are connected to the VISTA project
- Honor the VISTA's knowledge and experiences
  - Encourage more experienced VISTA members to share reflections and insights with new members
  - Connect alumni to facilitate networking and drive future recruitment



21

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Example 3 – Thank Members

Dial: 866-804-5824  
ID: 996-1208-0047



- Thank your VISTA members for serving
  - Simple words with significant meaning
  - Continually appreciate them and their service
  - Skip the generics; thank them for specific things
  - Publicly thank members; tell the organization about their work
  - Consider verbal, handwritten (e.g., greeting card or letter), electronic (e.g., very nice email, electronic greeting card), and more
- Show appreciation by encouraging boundaries
  - Protect time outside of business hours and VISTA Assignment Description duties to practice self care

*How do you thank your members?*



22

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Example 4 – Connect Virtually

Dial: 866-804-5824  
ID: 996-1208-0047



- Explore ways to connect and appreciate virtually
  - Show your continued appreciation for them and their service while they may be teleserving
  - Publicly acknowledge your VISTA members in video and phone meetings
  - Send electronic greeting cards or video messages
- Engage your members through virtual activities
  - Create Microsoft Teams or other groups to share stories
  - Create fun video calls, for education and engagement



23

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Ericc's VISTA Experience

Dial: 866-804-5824  
ID: 996-1208-0047



VISTA member 2006-2007 Served in Bristol, RI

- Things that helped with my retention:
  - Flexibility and trust from VISTA supervisor
  - Music and dancing; fun activities
  - Invitations to lunch with colleagues; dinners and gatherings with people in the community and people's friends
  - Active listening to my joys and my concerns, and working with me to solve challenges and incorporate my interests into my assignment
  - Wanting me to succeed in my VISTA service and accomplishing my VAD, and wanting to see my success
  - Allowing me to be myself; letting my personality permeate my work



24

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Other Ideas

Dial: 866-804-5824  
ID: 996-1208-0047



- Have a "VISTA Corner" section of your newsletter
- Encourage the VISTA to lead a meeting in-person or virtually
- Incorporate the VISTA member's skills and interests (which you can find in their member application) into activities
- Find out what makes them feel "at home" and find ways to help them feel that again (especially if your member relocated to serve)
- Be a mentor and coach, not just a supervisor

25

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## More Ideas

Dial: 866-804-5824  
ID: 996-1208-0047



- Work with your VISTA project to see if there are additional benefits you can offer
- Let the VISTA know about discounted/free things in the area
- Make use of meaningful icebreakers
- Have a monthly virtual poetry/open mic night
- Organize potluck gatherings in-person or virtually



26

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**SUCCESS**

isn't just about  
what you accomplish  
in your life, it's about  
what you **INSPIRE**  
others to do.

27

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Dial: 866-804-5824  
ID: 996-1208-0047



## Resources, Next Steps, Evaluation, and Q&A



28

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Dial: 866-804-5824  
ID: 996-1208-0047



## Retaining VISTA Members

[HOME](#) [MEMBERS](#) [LEADERS](#) [SUPERVISORS](#)

Home > Retention Log In/Sign Up

### Retention

#### VISTA Sponsor Handbook

Introduction  
Letter from the Director  
Overview of the VISTA  
Sponsor Handbook  
About CNCS  
Managing a VISTA Project  
Preparing for New VISTA Members  
Supporting and Supervising VISTA Members

Member retention is important not only for the success of accomplishing the VISTA project's goals, but also for the VISTA member's professional development and experience. VISTAs are more likely to serve effectively and complete their service terms when they feel valued at their sites. Some ways that sponsors can ensure their VISTA members feel valued are:

- Ensuring that all staff understand the VISTA program and the VISTA member role
- Delivering a strong OSOT (See Planning for On-Site Orientation and Training)
- Providing regular feedback, direction, and support, including weekly one-on-one check-ins
- Finding out what VISTAs need to succeed and addressing those needs
- Helping make life easier by providing supplemental benefits (See Supplemental Benefits)
- Giving VISTA members ownership of their projects
- Providing ongoing training and support for professional development (See Ongoing Training)
- Thanking VISTA members personally and recognizing them publicly

← Coaching the VISTA Member Administrative Support

29

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Dial: 866-804-5824  
ID: 996-1208-0047



## Retention Plan - Next Steps

- Take time to talk with your members
  - Learn about their concerns, interests, professional development goals
- Put yourself in a member's position
  - What would motivate you? What would keep you engaged and passionate about serving?
- Consider creating a schedule
  - Weekly meetings with members; when to do fun activities; when to check-in; when during the member's year to ask specific questions
- Reflect on and actualize ideas
  - What is feasible, and what can you start working on now?

30

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Session Goals

Dial: 866-804-5824  
ID: 996-1208-0047



Today, we discussed:

- ✓ Basic elements of member retention
- ✓ Ways to inspire and motivate your members
- ✓ Planning for retention and get feedback from your members
- ✓ Where to access resources and support

31

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Webinar Evaluation

Dial: 866-804-5824  
ID: 996-1208-0047



- How can we improve this session?
- Please complete a brief webinar evaluation survey, accessible:
  - Now, via the link in the Chat; and
  - After the webinar ends, the survey will open in the Internet browser you used to join this webinar.
- Thank you for your feedback!



32

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Next Webinar

Dial: 866-804-5824  
ID: 996-1208-0047



If you have further questions or would like more information, contact [VISTAtraining@cns.gov](mailto:VISTAtraining@cns.gov)

Please join us for the next supervisor webinar:

**Reporting and Data Collection**  
Tuesday, August 18, 2020  
2:00-3:00 p.m. ET

*Visit the Supervisor Webinars page on the VISTA Campus for upcoming webinars and recordings of past webinars.*

33

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

What questions do you have?

Dial: 866-804-5824  
ID: 996-1208-0047



34

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



35

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---