

From: **VHA Program Manager**  
Date: Fri, Apr 1, 2016 at 11:26 AM  
Subject: [VHA VISTA] VAD Action Planning

VISTA Site Supervisors,

Happy Friday everyone! I am putting on your radar an intentional conversation with your VISTA to debrief the orientation process and communicate the action steps for implementing their VAD.

The VHA VISTA Leader has asked the VISTAs to reflect on their learning and understanding of the community based on their OSOT and Community Orientation and then to meet with you to hear your guidance on the implementation of their VAD. Now that your VISTA has been serving for a month, gone through your OSOT and Community Orientation and reflected, they have an understanding of the Continuum of Care (CoC)/service provider landscape. This will help them to think strategically about the VAD activities.

Please lead them in a conversation to action plan their VADs.

Things to keep in mind during the conversation:

- Ask them about their learning and understanding of priorities/gaps/direction.
- Are the VISTA's skills and personality in line with original VAD activities?
- Has anything changed in the last 4 months since drafting the VAD activities?
- Currently, the VAD has Objectives and Activities, but not necessarily actionable steps. Defining these steps will help the VISTA keep momentum and clarity throughout the project implementation.
- We need to establish some numerical measures to put on the VADs going forward. Designate a few significant planned quantitative accomplishments (ex: Recruit 3 landlords; Create 1 best practice profile; Implement 1 summer Point-In-Time Count).

I have asked the VISTAs to try to reflect and meet with you by April 13. Attached are the reflection questions they are thinking through, and below is the message the VHA VISTA Leader sent them.

Have a great rest of the week and a relaxing Spring weekend!  
VHA Program Manager

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VHA AmeriCorps VISTA Members,

Thank you for so diligently finishing up your Community Orientation process! The understanding you have gained of your community provides the basis for deciding on a process to move this project forward. As the next steps, please:

1. Think through the attached reflection questions based on your learning during your OSOT and Community Orientation and your understanding of your VAD.
2. Fill out the first two columns of the Progress Tracker (for your use) to facilitate the action planning that you will be doing.
3. Schedule a meeting with your Site Supervisor to debrief the Community Orientation and to take a strategic look at your VAD.

The goal is for you and your Site Supervisor to come to a clear understanding of the action steps needed to implement the activities on your VAD and to accomplish the objectives.

You do not need to send your reflections to VHA, but please consider summarizing your answers for your debrief with your Site Supervisor. We have sent these questions to your Site Supervisor so that they are aware of your guided reflection.

Following this meeting, you can make use of the VAD Action Plan tool to outline the action steps and activities of your VAD as you discussed them with your Site Supervisor. You may also find a copy of the reflection questions as well as the Progress Tracker, the VAD Action Plan tool, and the tool guidance in the Community Orientation Materials subfolder in the Dropbox.

Please try to spend some time reflecting and discussing the VAD with your Site Supervisor by April 13. This gives you a week and a half!

Thanks everyone!

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### **Month One Self Reflection Questions**

What are three major themes you see in the community based off your OSOT and Community Orientation?

What are some things your community is doing to achieve its vision?

What questions do you have for your Site Supervisor regarding what your community is doing to achieve its vision?

What are a few gaps in the community about which you have learned (some ways in which the community still has work to do in order to achieve the vision)?

What questions do you have for your Site Supervisor regarding the priorities and gaps and how to address them?

Given your VAD and your learning from the Community Orientation, what are some specific action steps that you think you would need to take this year to achieve the activities listed under each of the objectives?

What questions do you have for your Site Supervisor regarding your VAD action steps?

What resources or skill-building opportunities have you identified that you need to carry out your VAD or to achieve your personal goals?

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### Guidance for Action Planning Your VAD

The purpose of this guidance is to explain how you can use a framework for planning the work to be accomplished in the VISTA service year and evaluating the impact of that work. The following tools will help facilitate the planning and evaluation process:

- **Community Orientation:** Facilitates the VISTA's learning about the community and/or CoC, Local Planning Group (LPG), or service provider and its needs, and provides a format for collecting information about the community's vision and its baseline conditions.
- **VAD Action Plan (VAP):** Captures the VAD objectives and activities, and outlines activities, strategies and due dates as an Action Plan.
- **Progress Tracker Tool (PTT):** Facilitates the evaluation by providing a table with rows for the major VAD activities and columns for the vision, baseline conditions, action steps, accomplishments, updated baseline conditions and planned goals for the next year.
- **Weekly Reports and Progress Reports:** Allow the VISTA to track the progress and completion of his/her work over time, and to communicate this documentation to VHA.

The steps in the planning and reporting process include the following:

#### 1. Community Orientation

Each VISTA must complete a Community Orientation during the first month of the service term in order to learn about the community (CoC, LPG, or service provider). The particular approach to be used in completing the Community Orientation at each site is to be determined by the Site Supervisor and VISTA based on their best professional judgment and the landscape of the site. The goal is to document the VISTA's learning, a baseline of the site prior to the VISTA's capacity building work and the vision.

#### 2. VAP

The VISTA having an understanding of the community's vision and current baseline will enable the VISTA to better understand the community's needs and the Site Supervisor to communicate an action plan for addressing them. As the Site Supervisor works with the VISTA to develop action steps to accomplish VAD activities, the VISTA can incorporate the agreed-upon activities into the VAP.

To use the VAP, the VISTA should record the numbers of the objectives and activities from the VAD, the descriptions from the objectives and activities, the particular action steps and strategies that the VISTA will undertake to achieve the activities, and the time frame for completing the activities. If there were any changes to the VAD activities, the Site Supervisor will communicate these to the VHA Program Manager.

### **3. PTT, Weekly Reports, and Progress Reports**

As the VISTA fills in the VAD/VAP, the VISTA will concurrently fill in the first 3 columns of the PTT as follows. (Doing this concurrently will save time in the long-run.)

*Column 1:* Use each row to reference a VAD Activity (using the Objective and Activity number). In that row, describe the vision from the Community Orientation. Ex: For Objective 1, Activity 2, you would enter 1.2 and describe the vision for that activity. During the VHA scoping training, VISTAs were asked to use these Objective and Activity numbers in the Weekly Reports.

*Column 2:* Describe the baseline conditions (current conditions found) from the Community Orientation for each VAD Activity in the rows.

*Column 3:* Continuing to fill in each row, describe the action steps (activities to complete) from the VAD Action Plan.

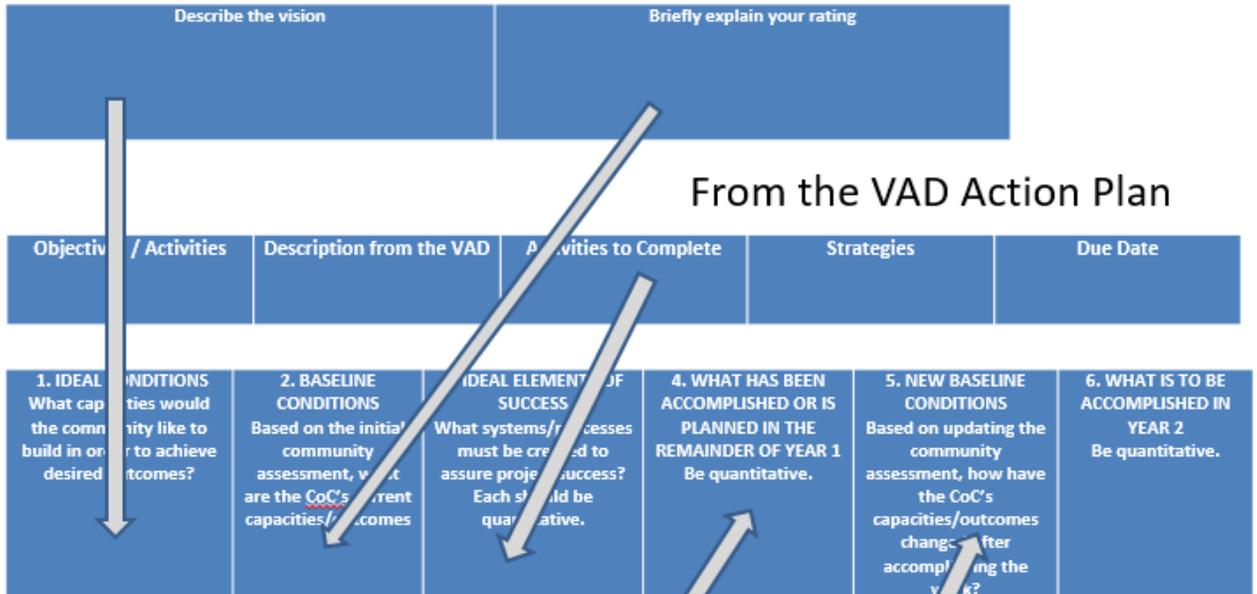
*Column 4:* As the VISTA describes completed work in the Weekly Report (referencing the Objective and Activity numbers), (s)he will quantify the same information in the PTT.

At 6 months into the service term, the VISTA will submit a Progress Report to the VISTA Leader that includes the PTT (with 4 columns filled out) and a one-page narrative description (using bullet points). In the narrative, the VISTA will describe the vision, baseline conditions and accomplishments as a point of departure for beginning to work on the activities for the second half of the service term.

Similarly, in January 2017, the VISTA will submit a final Progress Report, including the same components as in the 6-month Progress Report, updated baseline conditions (Column 5), and description of the work that will carry over or continue into the next year (Column 6). Please refer to the reports calendar for the schedule for submitting the progress reports.

# Progress Tracker Tool, Captures:

From the initial Community Orientation



From the weekly reports/progress reports

From the updated community orientation

## Progress Tracker Template

1. IDEAL CONDITIONS What capacities would the community like to build in order to achieve desired outcomes?	2. BASELINE CONDITIONS Based on the initial community assessment, what are the CoC's current capacities/outcomes?	3. IDEAL ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS What systems/processes must be created to assure project success? Each should be quantitative.	4. WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED OR IS PLANNED IN THE REMAINDER OF YEAR 1 Be quantitative.	5. NEW BASELINE CONDITIONS Based on updating the community assessment, how have the CoC's capacities/outcomes changed after accomplishing the work?	6. WHAT IS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED IN YEAR 2 Be quantitative.

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**VHA VAD Action Plan**  
[Site Name]

Objectives / Activities	Description from the VAD	Activities to Complete	Strategies	Due Date
<b>Objective 1</b>	<b>Promote permanent housing focused solutions to ending homelessness.</b>			
Activity 1				
Activity 2				
Activity 3				
Activity 4				
<b>Objective 2</b>	<b>Improve data quality and use in decision-making.</b>			
Activity 1				
Activity 2				
Activity 3				
Activity 4				
<b>Objective 3</b>	<b>Build strategic partnerships that advance efforts to end homelessness.</b>			
Activity 1				
Activity 2				
Activity 3				
Activity 4				
<b>Objective 4</b>	<b>Engage in special initiatives to end veteran and chronic homelessness.</b>			
Activity 1				
Activity 2				

<b>Objectives / Activities</b>	<b>Description from the VAD</b>	<b>Activities to Complete</b>	<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
Activity 3				
Activity 4				