



VISTA

Volunteers In Service To America

Recruiting for Diversity

A Resource for VISTA
Program Sponsors and
VISTA Leaders

Spring 2017 Action Learning Challenge

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How to Use This Product

This guide is meant to serve as supplement to current recruitment practices. By increasing diversity, we improve the quality of our programs.

The guide follows the recruitment process and offers suggestions at each step about how to make sure that you are accessible and welcoming to diverse populations. Each of the sections in the Table of Contents is hyperlinked to that page so that you can quickly reference based on where you are in recruitment. Also at the end of each section are additional resources for further information.

Acknowledgements

As VISTA Leaders, we have many opportunities and people who support us. We would like to take the time to thank a few of them.

- CNCS for allowing us this opportunity for professional development.
- Andy King for his guidance and feedback.
- Our Project Coach, Kapila Wewegama, for his support and guidance during the process.
- New Haven Education AmeriCorps VISTA Project for the AmeriCorps Online Application Guide.
- We would also like to thank our supervisors for their support during the action learning project.
 - Rachel Diskin at CEDAM
 - Glenn Goodrich at OneStar Foundation
 - Brittany Smart at Fairbanks North Star Borough
 - Carrie Williams-Howe at Vermont Higher Education Council

Introduction

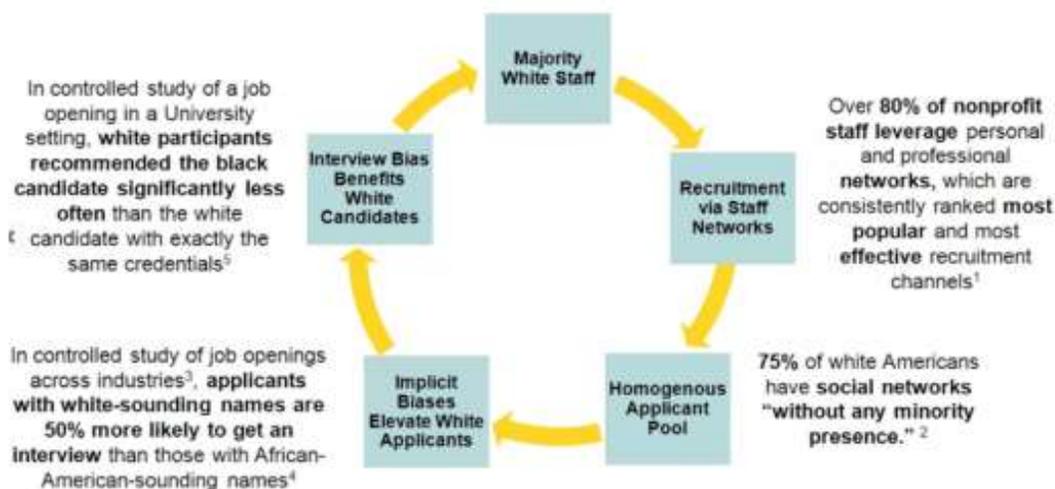
Our background

The VISTA program takes pride in serving all different types of individuals and communities throughout the country at national, regional, state, and local levels. The diversity represented among the VISTA Member and Leader community becomes an asset in effectively reaching out to communities and individuals that represent a myriad of different backgrounds and identities.

Therefore, having a VISTA community that represents such diversity helps the VISTA Members, Leaders and sponsors to better equip themselves to serve all different types of targeted individuals and communities. In addition, representation of diverse populations among the VISTA community will bring many different perspectives, ideas and thinking that will inform and enrich the VISTA program and projects.

Problem

Due to the barriers related to the VISTA program's outreach strategies, the diverse population and communities served by the VISTA program is not represented by a diverse population of VISTA members. With limited outreach resources, diverse VISTA members are scarce. Communities could strongly benefit from diverse VISTA member cohorts. A lack of sufficient recruitment strategies for diversity perpetuates the systems that keep individuals and communities in poverty, and without defined strategies, there is more work left on the shoulders of the VISTA programs and subsites. Current marketing resources, strategies and materials do not effectively connect with and engage diverse populations. Therefore, communities and populations served by VISTA are not benefiting from the program as much as they could with more diverse VISTA member cohorts.



<http://communitywealth.com/>

Mission

The mission of this action learning challenge team is to provide useful and relevant recruitment strategies for VISTA sponsors to assist in the diversification of their VISTA cohorts. As a result of these strategies, sponsors will have diverse VISTA members who will creatively solve problems with increased community participation.

Vision

When this project is accomplished, a greater percentage of diverse populations will be represented and participate in VISTA with the understanding that VISTA can be a tool to alleviate poverty.

Goals

- 1) To create a toolkit for VISTA sponsors that includes recruitment resources, materials, and strategies that utilize best practices in order to increase diversity among AmeriCorps VISTA members with the aim to ease and supplement current recruitment practices.
- 2) To develop specific marketing and outreach strategies that effectively connect with and engage diverse populations in VISTA service.

Who We Are

Kevin Kenneally

Kevin Kenneally is the VISTA Leader at Vermont Campus Compact in Colchester, VT. Vermont Campus Compact's VISTA program is focused on increasing college access and success for low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented individuals in Vermont. In his VISTA Leader role, Kevin focuses on building strong personal relationships with his VISTAs so that he can provide more targeted support and coaching. Kevin is passionate about educational equity and hopes to have a career serving underrepresented students in higher education. In his personal time, Kevin enjoys skiing, playing soccer, video games, and playing lawn games with friends.

Rhea Johnson

Rhea Johnson, VISTA Leader at Fairbanks North Star Borough Mayor's office, in Fairbanks AK. She currently leads 11 members within the Borough. As a VISTA member in Denver, CO Rhea served as a Development and Community Outreach Coordinator at a youth leadership program and urban garden. When the VISTA Leader at the time contacted her about serving in Alaska, she jumped at the chance to travel to the last frontier. Rhea has worked hard to develop a strong program supporting Fairbanks VISTAs. She has a passion for adventure, community and helping whoever and whenever she can. Since the start of her service, she was eager to grow the Fairbanks VISTA cohort in a diverse way. Her efforts first started out on the local level, and when she found out about the ALC project, she again jumped at the opportunity to help AmeriCorps VISTA diversify their members on a national level.

Caitlin Esping

Caitlin, originally from Portland, OR, is currently serving as a VISTA Leader in Austin, TX with the OneStar Foundation Statewide Intermediary Project. Her first year of service was with Marion County Emergency Management where she focused on community outreach and inclusive planning. Prior to serving, Caitlin attended Western Oregon University and spent time working as an educator. She believes that increased diversity within VISTA, or any program, results in stronger and more resilient organizations. In her free time, Caitlin enjoys spending time outdoors and cooling off in nearby swimming holes.

Stevie Chilcote

Stevie is from Lansing, MI. After serving in Peace Corps Tanzania as an agricultural volunteer, she joined an AmeriCorps State program and taught environmental education in Detroit. Now she serves as VISTA Leader for CEDAM's Rural Opportunity VISTA program, which works with rural communities to build their capacity for economic development. She believes that diversity in the VISTA program means representation for the communities we serve.

Definitions

Please note that this list is not comprehensive and includes working definitions for this product.

Accessibility

Easy to approach, reach, enter, speak with, or use.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The ADA is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public.



Assistive (or Adaptive) Technology

Tools that enable people with disabilities to accomplish daily living tasks and assist them with communication, education, work and recreational activities, thus allowing them to achieve greater independence and enhance their quality of life.

Bias

Prejudice; an inclination or preference, especially one that interferes with impartial judgment.

Color Blind

The belief in treating everyone “equally” by treating everyone the same; based in the presumption that differences are by definition bad or problematic, and therefore best ignored (i.e., “I don’t see race, gender, etc.”).

Dialogue

"Communication that creates and recreates multiple understandings" (Wink, 1997); it is bidirectional, not zero-sum and may or may not end in agreement; it can be emotional and uncomfortable, but is safe, respectful and has greater understanding as its goal.

Diversity

Individual differences (e.g., personality, learning styles, thought and life experiences) and group/social differences (e.g., Aboriginal, race/ethnicity, class, sex, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, ability as cultural, political, religious/spirituality, mental health status, language or other affiliations). The inclusion of individuals representing more than one national origin, color, religion, socioeconomic stratum, sexual orientation.

Equity

Fair and just treatment of all potential and existing members of the university community through the creation of opportunities to address historic and current disadvantage for underrepresented populations. These opportunities will lead to equitable outcomes in the context of learning, teaching, research, service and employment, including closing representation and participation gaps within our university community. Equity requires an intentional commitment to strategic priorities, resources, respect and civility, and ongoing action and assessment of progress towards achieving specified goals.

Gender

A socially constructed concept of “appropriate” qualities and expectations surrounding masculinity and femininity. This should not be confused with the biological male and female sexes.

Implicit bias

Refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual’s awareness or intentional control.

Inclusion

The identification and removal of barriers (e.g. physical, procedural, visible, invisible, intentional, unintentional) that inhibit members’ participation and contribution. Every member demonstrates being open to different voices and perspectives, developing an understanding of different cultures, experiences and communities, and making a conscious effort to be welcoming, helpful and respectful to everyone.

Inclusive language

Language that avoids the use of phrases and terms that devalue other people. Using inclusive language places value on all experiences and identities and helps us to reflect on our own unconscious biases surrounding what we perceive to be “normal.” Language can reinforce inequity based on dominant cultural norms.

Marginalized

Excluded, ignored, or relegated to the outer edge of a group/society/community.

Multiculturalism

Consists of or is the representative of different cultures. To build a **multicultural community** we must welcome, celebrate and recognize the differences of individuals and the diverse cultural communities that make up the university.

Safe Space: Refers to an environment in which everyone feels comfortable in expressing themselves and participating fully, without fear of attack, ridicule or denial of experience.

Privilege

A right or exemption from liability or duty granted as a special benefit or advantage. Oppression is the result of the use of institutional privilege and power, wherein one person or group benefits at the expense of another.

Race

A social construction that has real consequences and effects. Race is colloquially used to refer to a person’s skin color, religion or area of origin (e.g., black, Jewish or African). Technically, however, race is based on national origin, socio-cultural groups and self-identification.

Additional Resources

Diversity and Social Justice: A glossary of working definitions

A comprehensive list of definitions from University of Massachusetts’ Office of Multicultural affairs.

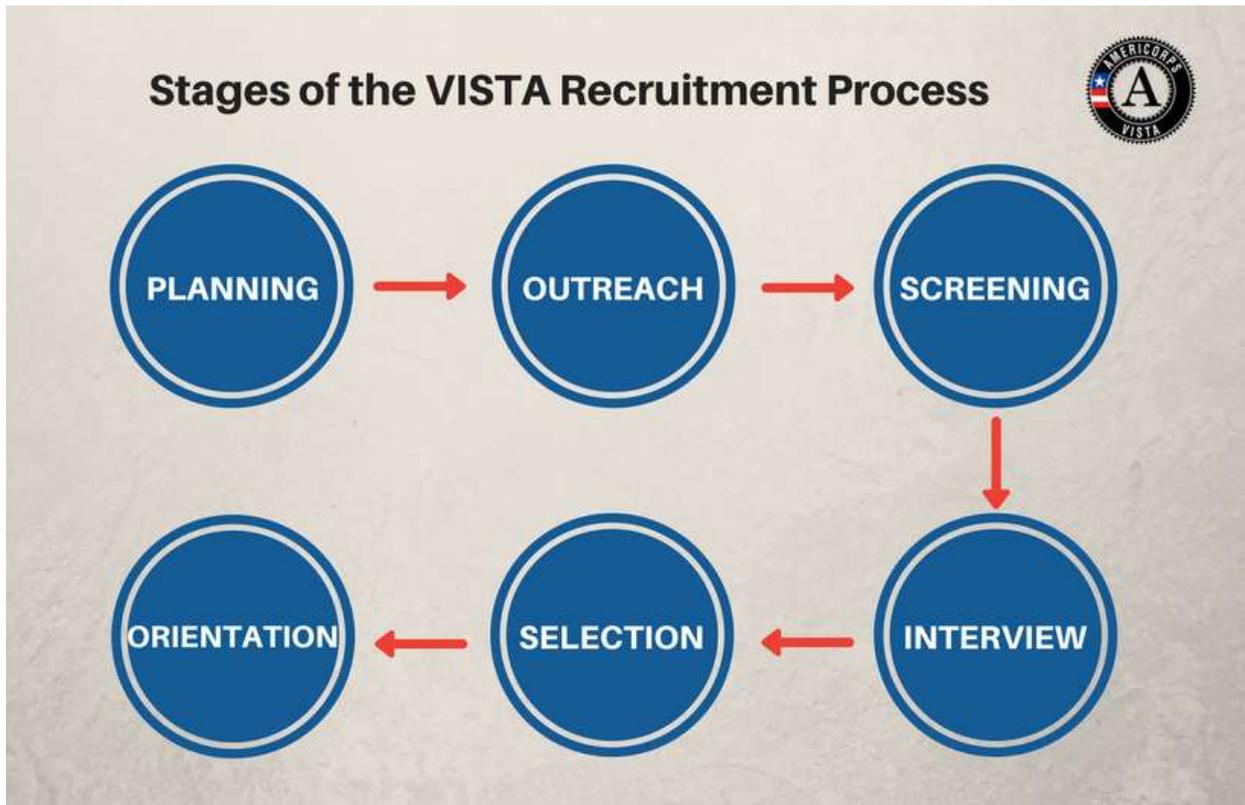
https://www.uml.edu/docs/Glossary_tcm18-55041.pdf

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Lexicon

From the Institutional Diversity Blog, this is a deeper dive into the principles and definitions around diversity.

<http://institutionaldiversityblog.com/glossary/>

Recruitment Map



Stages of the VISTA Recruitment Process developed by Summer 2013 Action Learning Challenge Team of Stanley Brajer, Kevin Gong, Andrea Grant, Regan Stark, and Sam Rigotti.

This is a visual representation of the AmeriCorps VISTA recruiting process. We have created and compiled resources to assist in your diversity recruitment efforts along every step of this process.

Planning

Develop a plan to successfully recruit VISTAs.

What sections can I use in this resource to assist in my planning efforts?

Outreach Strategies and Tools

Supporting Applicants

Making the Screening Process Inclusive and Mutually Beneficial

Retaining Diverse VISTAs

Appendix: Diversity Activities

Outreach

Advertise and publicize the available VISTA position(s).

What sections can I use in this resource to assist in my outreach efforts?

Outreach Strategies and Tools

Supporting Applicants

Appendix: Diversity Activities

Appendix: AmeriCorps VISTA Online Application Guide

Screening

Find out which applicants are qualified. Get to know your applicants informally.

What sections can I use in this resource to assist in my screening efforts?

Making the Screening Process Inclusive and Mutually Beneficial

Supporting Applicants

Appendix: Diversity Activities

Interview

Get to know and assess your applicants.

What sections can I use in this resource to assist in my interview efforts?

Supporting Applicants

Appendix: Diversity Activities

Selection

Select the right applicants for the position(s).

What sections can I use in this resource to assist in my selection efforts?

This document does not have any resources that specifically are targeted to support VISTA sponsors in their efforts during the selection step of the process. The hope is that the resources from the rest of the sections lead to the retention and successful selection of diverse applicants.

Orientation

Prepare your new VISTA members to succeed.

What sections can I use in this resource to assist in my orientation efforts?

Retaining Diverse VISTAs

Appendix: Diversity Activities

Outreach Strategies and Tools

Our goal in this section is to provide specific outreach strategies that effectively connect with and engage diverse populations in VISTA service. We hope to provide additional support to sponsors and VISTA Leaders with inclusive language and strategies that speak to a wider range of VISTA candidates. Ultimately, the most important piece of this is removing any bias in our marketing efforts. This can be achieved through the intentional usage of inclusive language, being very aware of the places we choose to market, and how those places can preference some candidates over others.

Goals for Your Own Outreach Tools and Strategies

- Make sure your messaging is inclusive, whether it be in-person or written.
 - Use inclusive language
 - Do not make any assumptions about candidate's social identities
- Use multiple avenues to recruit
 - Consider the bias that exists within the locations that you are conducting outreach on behalf of your VISTA program. Who is seeing your messaging? Who is your messaging connecting with? Why?
 - Online
 - Consider who has access to the online content that you are posting
 - Strategically think about and select organizations and Facebook groups to post outreach materials in
 - In-Person (most effective)
 - Be honest about the benefits of AmeriCorps VISTA service
 - Consider recruiting through multicultural/diversity offices on college campuses
 - Consider partnering and recruiting at historically diverse colleges and universities in your area
- Connect with people on a personal and values-based level. Have open conversations with potential applicants and offer them a value-based connection.

The Importance of Inclusive Language in Your Own Outreach Strategies

Inclusive language is important when conducting outreach strategies. Using inclusive language can broaden your efforts and help you reach a greater number of diverse applicants. You can find this definition along with several other definitions in the definition section of this tool kit.

Your outreach and marketing efforts are often the first time potential VISTAs become aware of your organization and VISTA. Due to this reality, it is of vital importance that inclusive language is embraced in every single advertisement, position posting, and outreach that you do on behalf of your VISTA program.

So what is inclusive language?

Inclusive language is language that avoids the use of phrases and terms that devalue other people. Using inclusive language places value on all experiences and identities.

Using inclusive language helps us to reflect on our own unconscious biases surrounding what we perceive to be “normal.” Language can reinforce inequity based on dominant cultural norms.

Inclusive language changes over time and it is important to acknowledge this. What is considered appropriate and inclusive language now could change.

Inclusive language resource: hrcouncil.ca

Important considerations when it comes to inclusive language in your outreach strategies

Please note that this list is not exhaustive and only provides some examples of areas you need to consider when using inclusive language in your own outreach strategies.

Gender and Sexual Orientation

- Be aware that there is a difference between gender and sexual orientation.
- Gender exists on a continuum. Trans, transgendered, and transsexual refer to gender identity rather than sexual orientation.
- Be aware of the fact that not everyone uses he/his and she/her as their preferred pronouns. An individual’s preferred pronouns should be used and never assumed, so try to avoid using phrases like “his or her” in your outreach efforts.

Race and Ethnicity

- Make sure to avoid references that draw unnecessary attention to race. When a reference is relevant, make sure to learn the appropriate terminology. Using a phrase like “people of color” is appropriate because it places people first, not the descriptor (saying “colored people” would be inappropriate).

Disability

- Use language that focuses on the individual, not the disability. Do not define others with their disability.
- Say “people with muscular dystrophy,” not “the disabled.”

Age

- Although the majority of VISTAs are recent college graduates, there is no age restriction surrounding participating in VISTA. Make sure not to only market your VISTA program as an opportunity to gain experience right after attending college.

Language

- The importance of providing outreach material in different language is something often overlooked to those of us that only speak one language. Often times position posts ask

for people that speak languages in other language but rarely create outreach material in the desired second language.

Position Postings

Limitations

When creating an AmeriCorps VISTA posting there are several limitations to take into consideration. One of these being that the format for posting on MyAmeriCorps, as well as many other job boards have restrictions. For example, you may not be able to control the font type or size making your post potentially less accessible to some individuals. Another limitation could be additional benefits, some site might be able to offer benefits to VISTAs such as a housing stipend (paid directly to a landlord), a monthly bus pass, or other nonmonetary supports while other sites cannot. Below you will find some advice on how to work within limitations and improve your postings.

Five Tips for Postings

- 1) List Minimum qualifications- Example: Some College vs. College Graduate. When higher than necessary requirements are listed applicants can be discouraged from apply, which limits the size of the applicant pool and leaves out potentially qualified applicants.
- 2) Use Inclusive Language. Inclusive language avoids the use of phrases and terms that devalue other people. Using inclusive language places value on all experiences and identities and helps us to reflect on our own unconscious biases surrounding what we perceive to be “normal.” Language can reinforce inequity based on dominant cultural norms.
- 3) Write in terms easily understood by the general-public. Avoid unnecessarily long words, jargon, acronyms, clichés, colloquialisms, and regional or cultural terms. These terms are not inclusive and can deter qualified applicants from applying.
- 4) Explicitly mention a commitment to diversity, try one or more of the following methods.
 - Encouraging diverse applicants to apply.
 - Express a company value of diversity.
 - Look for experience working with diverse groups.
 - List experience working in a diverse environment as a preferred qualification.
- 5) Specifically mention benefits that are supportive of diverse workers. Ex: Flexible hours, accessible facilities and workplace environments, mentoring, training opportunities, inclusive restrooms, childcare assistance, transportation reimbursement, etcetera. Only promise benefits you are able to provide.

Key parts to an AmeriCorps VISTA position posting

Some parts of an AmeriCorps posting have been omitted due to the limitations associated with those pieces. For example- position location is not included on the list below because the location of the position will remain constant.

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Title

- Keep Titles simple and descriptive.
- Use position titles not organizations.

Description

- Capture highlights of the site and location.
- Mention commitment to diversity.
- Highlight benefits not mentioned in program benefits, like mentoring or flexible hours.

Member Duties

- Stick to position objectives and activities.
- Include only essential duties.

Skills

- List the most relevant skills so as not to deter away potential candidates.

Education Level

- Choose lowest education level required.

Age Requirement

- Do not add unnecessary age restrictions.

Languages

- If fluency in a specific language is not required put preferred.
-

Creative post locations

This is not an exhaustive list.

- Service Year: www.serviceyear.org
- Colleges
- Junior Colleges or Community Colleges
- Multicultural Student Unions or other culture based student organizations
- Nontraditional Student Organizations
- Offices of Disability and inclusion
- Historically Black Colleges
- Professional Organizations (Local and National Chapters)
- The United Way, Goodwill, other social service organizations with employment related missions
- Job Websites
- Indeed, Idealist, LinkedIn
- Facebook, Twitter, other social media outlets
- Host site or sub-site's Website, newsletter, or other communication outlets

Recruiting for Diversity: A Resource for VISTA Program Sponsors and VISTA Leaders

- Local Libraries
- Community Centers
- Women's Centers
- Anywhere with a community posting board

Example Post

Below is a sample position posting, this posting is for a fabricated VISTA position.

East Portland Community Association - Urban Sprouts Program VISTA

East Portland Community Association (EPCA) Urban Sprouts is a rapidly growing non-profit organization that uses gardening to transform the lives of youth and inspire, engage, and nourish the community. Using an on-site community garden and accompanying curriculum, EPCA Urban Sprouts provides local pre-school aged youth the opportunity to gain importance school readiness skills in a hands on environment. EPCA Urban Sprouts engages young people to connect with the land and food all while hitting important developmental milestones. EPCA Urban Sprouts also provides several support programs to parents and families of our youth. As an organization, we are committed to the success and growth of local and diverse youth. Our organizational culture, defined by our Guiding Principles, informs how we fulfill our mission and how we work together as a team. The Guiding Principles of EPCA Urban Sprouts: 1. We provide a high quality educational experience for youth that will prepare them for school and beyond. 2. We build Strong Relationships with families and the community. 3. We are committed to creating an inclusive environment that values diversity. EPCA Urban Sprouts supports staff with unique benefits such as onsite childcare, flexible schedules, mentoring, training opportunities, and fresh produce from our own gardens. This is an exciting time at EPCA Urban Sprouts and in Portland, ME. EPCA Urban Sprouts is seeking a VISTA to help support new programs and improve existing ones as we continue to transform the lives of young people in Portland.

Member Duties:

EPCA Urban Sprouts Programs VISTA will be a critical member of a dedicated team. The VISTA will learn the ins and outs of programming by helping to grow EPCA Urban Sprouts new after-school program for school-aged youth. The VISTA will help develop recruitment strategies and engaging materials to ensure we have a diverse cohort of youth in our programs. The VISTA will work with our program team in the EPCA Urban Sprouts office; however, they also will spend some time in our classrooms and on-site garden to evaluate the success of our programs. The VISTA will also spend time doing outreach in the community.

Program Benefits:

Childcare assistance if eligible, Choice of Education Award or End of Service Stipend, Health Coverage*, Training, Stipend, Relocation Allowance, Living Allowance.

*For details about AmeriCorps VISTA healthcare benefits, please visit <http://www.vistacampus.gov/healthcare>

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Terms:

Permits attendance at school during off hours, Permits working at another job during off hours.

Service Areas:

Children/Youth, Health, Community Outreach, Hunger.

Skills:

Writing/Editing, Communications, Education, Youth Development, Recruitment

Position Posting Resources

Information on Posting Practices

<https://thinkgrowth.org/your-job-descriptions-are-hurting-your-hiring-pipeline-52b5a406fb8f>

http://www.bu.edu/apfd/recruitment/fsm/advertising_and_recruiting/

List of Diversity Focused Recruitment Resources

http://hr.fas.harvard.edu/files/fas-hr/files/diversity_recruitment_resources.pdf

Outreach Tools

This section provides articles and examples of outreach tools you could use in your own VISTA outreach efforts to recruit a more diverse pool of candidates.

Two tools provided below bring awareness to bridging the diversity gap in your marketing efforts and come from Lisa A. Guion and David C. Diehl (articles provided in the links below).

Ethnic Marketing: A Strategy for Marketing Programs to Diverse Audiences

<http://ufdcimages.uflib.ufl.edu/IR/00/00/33/54/00001/FY75800.pdf>

Ethnic marketing employs the personal marketing strategies that best reflect the cultural values, beliefs, and norms of the ethnic audience you are targeting

Check out this resource to see what common errors you are making when it comes to your own efforts when it comes to recruiting for diversity and get ideas about how to fix them.

Personal Marketing: A Strategy for Marketing Programs to Diverse Audiences:

<http://extension.usu.edu/diversity/ou-files/Newletters/PersonalMarket1105.pdf>

Personal marketing, or direct marketing, requires face-to-face contact. Traditional marketing (brochures or flyers, for example) is less dynamic and does not often offer a real sense of connection to diverse candidates.

Personal marketing assists in successfully bridging the gap between you and your audiences. Personal marketing takes into account the unique value systems of different ethnic groups.

Additional Resources

Smallbusiness.chron.com

<http://smallbusiness.chron.com/importance-diversity-marketing-24765.html>

Provides several articles highlight the importance of diversity in marketing as well as marketing tools and more.

The links below are different outreach templates. Here we have a “Benefits of VISTA” flyer, and member spotlight flyers can be handed out at different presentations. Resources such as Google Translate can translate outreach flyers and presentations into other languages to reach people that speak one or more language. Our ALC member Stevie Chilcote provided flyers that VISTA members created as a way to directly show why people choose to join VISTA and how it has helped them professionally.

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/OB-Wouzr8XNlueUVidHdjM1dPVWs>

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/OB-Wouzr8XNlueUVidHdjM1dPVWs>

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/OB-Wouzr8XNlueUVidHdjM1dPVWs>

Supporting Applicants

Why this section?

To become a VISTA, each potential applicant must make an account on My AmeriCorps and apply for the position. However, My AmeriCorps can be intimidating and can be the reason that applicants drop out.

This guide is meant to walk the applicant through the process step-by-step. With this, the applicant can examine the questions and requirements beforehand and prepare. It will also help troubleshoot any issues that an applicant might face while filling out the application.

How to use this guide?

The guide is broken up into two sections: how to create an account and how to apply for a position. Each section has step-by-step descriptions and screenshots of the My AmeriCorps platform to guide the potential applicant. It is written to the applicant and will give them an idea of what to expect while filling out the application so that they can write out answers to the questions before starting the online application.

For Supervisors

As a supervisor, you care about the quality of your program, but do not necessarily have extra time to devote to recruitment. The goal of this guide is to give you quick and easy ways to support your applicants, and by supporting your applicants, you will have more and ones that represent the communities that you serve. With more applicants, you will be able to find the best candidate, and with better candidates, you will have the best possible program.

To support applicants through the process, please depend on your VISTA Leader for knowledge of application process and have a list of applicant resources like this one to draw on.

For VISTA Leaders

As a VISTA Leader and a currently serving member, you have an intimate knowledge of the application process. Part of being a VISTA Leader is mentoring, and when it comes to recruitment, you are the applicant's best resource because you know exactly how frustrating and intimidating the My AmeriCorps platform can seem.

Example Barriers for Applicants (Why and solutions)

This list is not comprehensive, but a general idea of the barriers to diversity presented by the My AmeriCorps application process and ways that you can help potential applicants overcome them.

Knowledge of resources

Potential applicants may not know about the application assistance that exists.

It is the responsibility of supervisors and VISTA Leaders to communicate resources in job postings and continue to support throughout the application process. Make sure that your contact information is on the job postings as well as a link to useful resources.

Language barrier

If English is a second language, My AmeriCorps might contain words and instructions that an applicant does not understand. It can also make it difficult to ask for help, especially if the applicant is concerned that their level of English proficiency might create bias against their application. Language barriers could also include blindness or other sight issues.

AmeriCorps will provide help if the applicant is using [assistive technology](#). Call the National Service Hotline at 1-800-942-2677.

Make sure that your recruitment materials and communication is in large print and friendly fonts. Here is a study that lists good fonts for people with dyslexia:

http://dyslexiahelp.umich.edu/sites/default/files/good_fonts_for_dyslexia_study.pdf.

If you live in area where the potential is high that English might not be an applicant's first language, make sure that you know a contactor that will translate for the most common languages you might encounter, and do the same for sign language and speaking disabilities.

Also, make sure that your materials are at the average reading level in the United States of 7th or 8th grade. You can check it on Microsoft Word by following these directions:

http://casemed.case.edu/cpcpold/students/module4/Word_Readability.pdf.

Using Inclusive Language

Using inclusive language helps us to reflect on our own unconscious biases surrounding what we perceive to be "normal." Language can reinforce inequity based on dominant cultural norms. Inclusive language changes over time and it is important to acknowledge this, and what is considered appropriate and inclusive language now could change.

When talking to potential applicants, make sure that you are using inclusive language. If you are unsure about what language to use, ask the applicant. By using inclusive language, you demonstrate to the applicant that you are a welcoming and safe environment to serve.

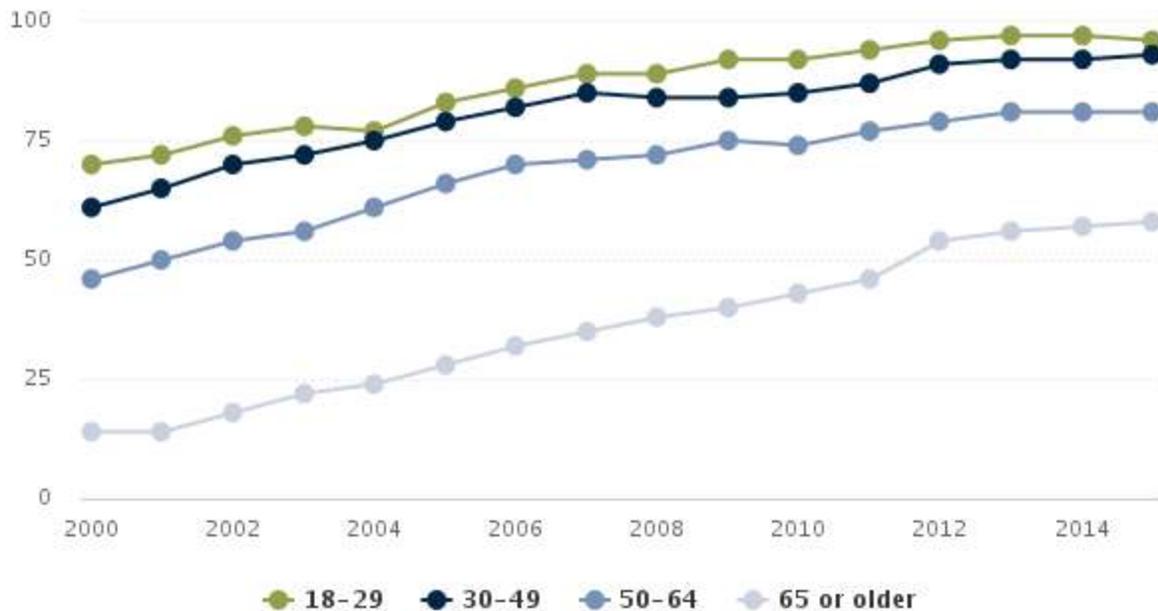
Internet access

Some people do not have sustained access to the internet, and have to pay to use it at a library or internet cafe. This applies to rural areas as much as urban. Many rural areas have limited access, and for some, it can be cost-prohibitive to have internet service.

Accept resume, cover letter, and references in alternative formats, while they finish the online application at their own pace. If you send them the guide, then they can write out their answers beforehand and will not have to spend a lot of time with a computer.

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Among all American adults, the % who use the internet, by age



<http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/06/26/americans-internet-access-2000-2015/>

Monetary

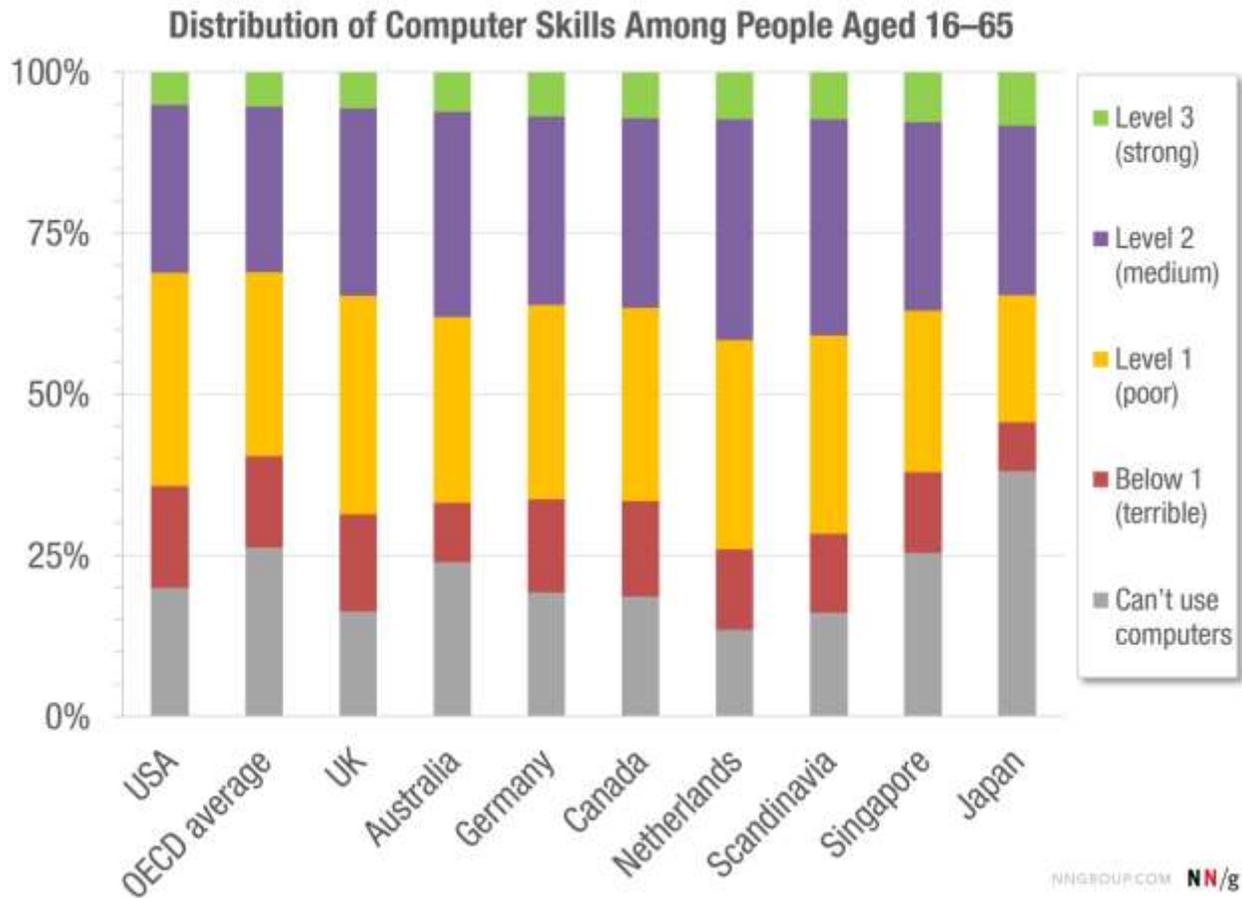
For some applicants, online applications require money for Internet and transportation. If an applicant needs to travel to the library and pay to use their internet, the cost could keep them from applying. There is also the cost in time, if the applicant has to take public transportation to a library or internet cafe.

In your budget if possible, include a small stipend to cover computer or travel reimbursements for applicants. You can also provide a list of places where an applicant can use the internet for free.

Computer literacy

Not everyone has had the same experience and education surrounding computers, which can make the online application daunting.

Share the guide and call the National Service Hotline at 1-800-942-2677. Be patient and understanding with different levels of computer literacy.



<https://www.nngroup.com/articles/computer-skill-levels/>

My AmeriCorps website glitches

It is easy to dismiss computer issues as user error and can discourage an applicant.

Have the applicant call the National Service Hotline at 1-800-942-2677 or visit https://questions.nationalservice.gov/app/ask_mac to submit a question via email.

Additional Resources

Accessible Recruitment Checklist

This checklist will help you discover how accessible your application process is, especially for people with disabilities.

http://bbi.syr.edu/projects/Demand Side Models/docs/accessible_recruitment_checklist.pdf

My AmeriCorps User Guide for Sponsors

On VISTA Campus, this guide goes through the details about how My AmeriCorps interacts with eGrants.

<https://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/my-ameri-corps-user-guide-sponsors>

Diversity and Nonprofits: How to add a little more color to your volunteer set

From VolunteerMatch.org, the easy-to-read blog post offers simple steps to increase diversity in your volunteer group as well as links to more resources.

<http://blogs.volunteermatch.org/engagingvolunteers/2012/02/02/diversity-and-nonprofits-how-to-add-a-little-more-color-to-your-volunteer-set/>

Implicit Bias Evaluation Activity

Do you unknowingly prefer one level of diversity to another? This online test from Harvard will help you discover what your implicit biases might be, which will help guide your actions during the recruitment process.

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

Making the Screening Process Inclusive and Mutually Beneficial

The screening process, which is conducted before holding a formal interview with a VISTA applicant, is traditionally focused on ensuring that the applicant meets basic VISTA requirements and understands terms of service. While that certainly is important, the screening process is one that should be mutually beneficial. As much as a VISTA program sponsor wants to assess whether an applicant is a good fit, it is important to consider that the applicant also wants to assess if the program is a good fit for them.

VISTA Leaders, staff representatives of the VISTA program, or individual(s) that conduct screenings can vary from program to program. If you are responsible for conducting screening calls, here are goals to keep in mind.

Goals for the Screening Process

In order to have a successful screening process, you must:

- Make sure the process is inclusive
 - Use inclusive language
 - Do not make any assumptions about candidates' social identities

- Make sure the process is mutually beneficial
 - Ask questions of the candidate, but allow candidate opportunities to ask questions throughout screening
 - Allowing a candidate to ask questions before you removes the dichotomy between interviewer and applicant

- Keep it relatively informal

- Aid candidate in understanding CNCS, AmeriCorps VISTA, your organization, and the VISTA host site

- Clearly present benefits associated with being a VISTA without the candidate having to ask
 - Directly address potential barriers to service

- Assess candidate's fit for AmeriCorps VISTA service
 - Understanding of terms/conditions of service
 - Mindset

Important Talking Points to Make the Screening Process Inclusive and Mutually Beneficial

Come out and tell applicants what the point of the screening call is. Tell them that it is not the formal interview, but an opportunity for them to learn about you as much as it is for you to learn about them.

Because VISTA applicants are assessing if VISTA is a good fit for them during the screening conversation, it is important to directly address potential barriers with **all** candidates. Do not present them as barriers, but offer up how your VISTA program supports their VISTA members in light of potential barriers to successfully completing a term of service. For example:

- Give exact amount of living stipend (broken down yearly and biweekly)
- Then mention additional support options. These could include:
- Relocation/settling in allowances (if applicable)
- Outside employment
- If your organization/VISTA host site offers additional benefits
- Federal or state assistance available in your area
- Healthcare benefits
- Explain Education Award/end of service stipend and provide exact amounts
- Explain childcare support option
- Be very honest with candidates about the steps of your hiring process, especially if you are hiring on a rolling basis
- If the host site supervisor is making the final decision, let candidates know
- Honestly and respectfully ask candidates if they have any hesitations about the position that they'd like to address

The Importance of Inclusive Language

It is of vital importance to use inclusive language when speaking with anyone, but especially during a hiring process. Since the screening process is often the first time significant conversation occurs between a VISTA program representative and a VISTA applicant, it is of the utmost importance that inclusive language is embraced with every candidate.

So what is inclusive language?

Inclusive language is language that avoids the use of phrases and terms that devalue other people. Using inclusive language places value on all experiences and identities.

Using inclusive language helps us to reflect on our own unconscious biases surrounding what we perceive to be “normal.” Language can reinforce inequity based on dominant cultural norms.

Inclusive language changes over time and it is important to acknowledge this. What is considered appropriate and inclusive language now could change.

Inclusive language resource: hrcouncil.ca

Important considerations when it comes to inclusive language in your screening process

Here is an example of a screening conversation between a VISTA Leader and a VISTA applicant. Within these examples (which are non-exhaustive), you will see both a successful use of inclusive language and an unsuccessful one. It is important to note that you are not trying to assume anyone's social identities when entering conversations, but rather that you are conscious and respectful to all people. The reality of the matter is that you do not know what the background of a specific individual before you meet them.

Gender and Sexual Orientation

- Unsuccessful
 - **Applicant:** Do you provide any additional housing assistance?
 - **Leader:** Whoever is selected for this position will have an additional \$150/month to cover his or her housing expenses.

- Successful
 - **Applicant:** Do you provide any additional housing assistance?
 - **Leader:** Whoever is selected for this position will receive an extra \$150/month of housing support provided by the host site.

- Explanation
 - Gender exists on a continuum. Trans, transgendered, and transsexual refer to gender identity rather than sexual orientation.
 - Preferred pronouns should be used. Using his or her shows gender bias.

Race and Ethnicity

- Unsuccessful
 - **Applicant:** What populations would I be serving in this role?
 - **Leader:** You would be setting up programming that assists minorities in our local community.

- Successful
 - **Applicant:** What populations would I be serving in this role?
 - **Leader:** You would be setting up programming that largely assists people of color in our local community.

- Explanation
 - Using a term like “minority” implies inferiority.
 - Make sure to avoid references that draw unnecessary attention to race. When a reference is relevant, make sure to learn the appropriate terminology. Using a phrase like “people of color” is appropriate because it places people first, not the descriptor (saying “colored people” would be inappropriate).

Disability

- Unsuccessful
 - **Applicant:** What led you to being interested in serving as a VISTA?
 - **Leader:** In college, I did a lot of volunteering at an organization that supports the disabled. That's where it all started.
- Successful
 - **Applicant:** What led you to being interested in serving as a VISTA?
 - **Leader:** In college, I did a lot of volunteering at an organization that supports persons with disabilities. That's where it all started.
- Explanation
 - Use language that focuses on the individual, not on the disability. You do not want to define others with their disability.

Takeaways for the Three Main Areas of the Screening Process

There are three main areas within the screening process—initial contact with a candidate, screening, and follow-up. Here are some key takeaways and important things to remember at each step in order to better retain diverse candidates:

Initial contact

- Use inclusive language
- Be honest about the goals of the screening process
- Lay out the steps of your hiring process

Screening

- Use inclusive language
- Remember that the screening process should be mutually beneficial—give candidates ample opportunity to ask questions before you
- Remind candidates of goals of screening
- Address potential barriers to service respectfully by describing additional support options without being asked

Follow-up

- Use inclusive language
- Make sure to follow up with all candidates after a VISTA has been selected to thank them, regardless of if they got the position or not
- If you have other positions that candidates who were not selected might be a good fit for, consider suggesting that they apply

Retaining Diverse VISTAs

The first three months of service can be the most important regarding diverse VISTA retention. Our goal is not only to recruit diverse VISTA members, but also to retain them and help have a successful service. This section will provide guidance to sponsors and VISTA Leaders. It is important for both to be involved with establishing an environment that is welcoming, helpful and inclusive. We hope this section can provide sponsors and VISTA Leaders with tools to effectively retain their diverse VISTA members.

Providing this support at the beginning of a diverse VISTA member's service will help them feel more comfortable in the community if they are new to it. If the member is from the community, it can still offer resources they may not have been aware of. These resources can help diverse members connect with people in the community that come from similar backgrounds and have similar abilities. These tools can help sponsors and VISTA Leaders provide diverse members with support and community outside of the VISTA cohort.

Another important aspect to keep in mind when retaining diverse VISTA members is understanding Inclusive language. This definition can be found along with several other terms and definitions in the definitions section.

Additional Resources

Below are two different templates. You can edit them to fit your community and implement them into orientation and throughout their service.

VISTA Survival Guide

<https://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/vista-survival-guide>

This link will bring you to the vistacampus.gov website and offer you a template for a VISTA Survival Guide. This guide was shared by Jackie St. John (a VISTA Leader in 2015-2016), who served in with Prevent Child Abuse California.

This guide could also be used as part of a webinar orientation for remote VISTAs or at in a house orientation. For remote members, it will require some research on what their state offers as a whole or researching individual cities and countries. The previous VISTA can also include this information in their sustainability binder.

Importance of Self Care for VISTAs

<https://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/importance-self-care-powerpoint>

This next resource was created by VISTA Leader Stevie Chilcote. This link will offer you a PowerPoint focusing on self-care. Highlighting the life cycle of a VISTA is important when retaining diverse VISTA members.

VISTA Leader and ALC team member, Rhea Johnson developed a guide for her VISTA cohort that provides VISTAs with specific organizations that can support a VISTA within their community. Example of the types of organizations/groups to include but are not limited to:

- ADA approved buildings, apartments
- Diversity committees
- AA meeting times and locations
- Companies that offer senior discounts
- ADA taxi services
- Eye care Medicaid providers
- Dental care Medicaid providers
- General health care Medicaid providers
- Bus systems resources
- Sports Clubs and associations
- Health Clubs
- YMAC
- Thrift stores
- Food pantries
- Art galleries and “First Friday events”
- University clubs, events and activities open to the public
- Free Museum days
- Yoga or other opportunities for a work exchange. Cleaning to yoga studio for free classes, as an example.
- Free tax Assistance
- Senior center activities that are open to the public.
- Community centers

Compilation of Resources

Definitions Section

Diversity and Social Justice: A glossary of working definitions

A comprehensive list of definitions from University of Massachusetts’ Office of Multicultural affairs.

https://www.uml.edu/docs/Glossary_tcm18-55041.pdf

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Lexicon

From the Institutional Diversity Blog, this is a deeper dive into the principles and definitions around diversity.

<http://institutionaldiversityblog.com/glossary/>

Outreach Strategies and Tools Section

Smallbusiness.chron.com

Provides several articles highlight the importance of diversity in marketing as well as marketing tools and more.

<http://smallbusiness.chron.com/importance-diversity-marketing-24765.html>

Benefits of VISTA

The links below are different outreach templates. Here we have a “Benefits of VISTA” flyer, and member spotlight flyers can be handed out at different presentations. Resources such as google translate can translate outreach flyers and presentations into other languages to reach people that speak one or more language. Our ALC member Stevie Chilcote provided flyers that VISTA members created as a way to directly show why people choose to join VISTA and how it has helped them professionally.

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/OB-Wouzr8XNlueUVidHdjM1dPVWs>

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/OB-Wouzr8XNlueUVidHdjM1dPVWs>

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/OB-Wouzr8XNlueUVidHdjM1dPVWs>

Position Posts

Information on Posting Practices

<https://thinkgrowth.org/your-job-descriptions-are-hurting-your-hiring-pipeline-52b5a406fb8f>

http://www.bu.edu/apfd/recruitment/fsm/advertising_and_recruiting/

List of Diversity Focused Recruitment Resources

http://hr.fas.harvard.edu/files/fas-hr/files/diversity_recruitment_resources.pdf

Supporting Applicants Section

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<https://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/vista-survival-guide>

Self-Care Training Session

This next resource was brought to us by VISTA Leader and current ALC member Stevie Chilcote. This link will offer you a PowerPoint focusing on self-care. Highlighting the life cycle of a VISTA is important when retaining diverse VISTA members.

<https://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/importance-self-care-powerpoint>

Diversity Activities

Activities for Teaching about Prejudice and Discrimination

This guide from Ball State University has a variety of activities that delve into prejudice and discrimination. Each activity includes a background description and more resources.

<http://www.apadiv2.org/Resources/Documents/otrp/resources/kite13.pdf>

Disability Awareness Packet

Focusing on varying types of disabilities, this includes activities and resources that help build awareness of the challenges faced by people with disabilities.

<https://www.dvusd.org/cms/lib011/AZ01901092/Centricity/Domain/1318/Disability%20Awareness%20Packet%202.pdf>

Training for Change

These activities focus more about the activist approach to diversity, but includes some powerful tools to discuss privilege and diversity. Comes with Spanish translations for some of the activities.

<https://www.trainingforchange.org/tools>