

*VISTA ... A Legacy of Service*



# SUPERVISOR ORIENTATION

Summer 2018



# VISTA Supervisor Tasks

*This planning tool includes important tasks and information for all VISTA supervisors, including those of intermediary projects. The purpose of this checklist is to help you organize and support the many activities associated with managing a successful VISTA project. If you are an intermediary, you may want a separate document for each of your sites (also referred to as a sub-site). Creating separate planning documents per site will help define the individual timelines and persons responsible.*

Suggestions for using this task list:

1. Indicate the status of each task to determine progress and next steps.
  - P (In Progress)
  - C (Complete)
  - N (Not started)
2. Provide a target date or range (e.g., specific week/month or ongoing) for each task.
3. Use the lead column to assign tasks to individuals.
4. Utilize the notes column to keep track of next steps and jot down questions.

## VISTA Program Overview

Tasks	Timeline	Lead	Resources	Status	Notes
Review the history and learn the mission & program initiatives of VISTA			AmeriCorps VISTA History & Legacy (Video) <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/vista-legacy-video-1">www.vistacampus.gov/resources/vista-legacy-video-1</a>  VISTA 101 (Flash Course) <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/vista-101-understanding-vista-0">www.vistacampus.gov/resources/vista-101-understanding-vista-0</a>	P / C / N	
Familiarize yourself with the organizational structure of National Service			Service Connections (PDF) <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/service-connections">www.vistacampus.gov/resources/service-connections</a>	P / C / N	

# VISTA Supervisor Tasks

## Project Fundamentals

Tasks	Timeline	Lead	Resources	Status	Notes
Understand capacity-building goals of the project (e.g., program design, volunteer development, grant/fundraiser development)			Capacity Building in Action for Supervisors (Flash Course) <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/lessons/capacity-building-action-supervisors">www.vistacampus.gov/lessons/capacity-building-action-supervisors</a>  Capacity Building Game (PDF) <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/capacity-building-game">www.vistacampus.gov/resources/capacity-building-game</a>	P / C / N	
Know the elements of your overall Project Plan including targeted goals and performance measures for your site			VISTA Performance Measures (HTML) <a href="http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/vista">www.nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/vista</a>	P / C / N	Intermediary shares plan with sub-site supervisors
Understand project reporting requirements			Reporting and Evaluation (HTML) <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/supervisors/reporting-and-evaluation">www.vistacampus.gov/supervisors/reporting-and-evaluation</a>	P / C / N	Sub-sites are responsible for collecting and sharing data with intermediary
Orient sub-site supervisors to their role			Training Sub-site Supervisors Syllabus (PDF) <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/training-sub-site-supervisors-syllabus">www.vistacampus.gov/resources/training-sub-site-supervisors-syllabus</a>  VISTA Program Overview Customizable PowerPoint Presentation (PPTX) <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/vista-program-overview-customizable-powerpoint-presentation">www.vistacampus.gov/resources/vista-program-overview-customizable-powerpoint-presentation</a>	P / C / N	
Craft or update VAD(s) for your project			Creating Effective VADs (Flash Course) <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/creating-effective-vads">www.vistacampus.gov/resources/creating-effective-vads</a>  Sample VADs (PDF) <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/sample-vad">www.vistacampus.gov/resources/sample-vad</a>	P / C / N	

# VISTA Supervisor Tasks

## Project Fundamentals, cont.

Tasks	Timeline	Lead	Resources	Status	Notes
Submit VAD(s) to your State Office via eGrants			VISTA Assignment Description (VAD): Training Manual for Sponsors (DOC) <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/vista-assignment-description-training-manual-vista-sponsors">www.vistacampus.gov/resources/vista-assignment-description-training-manual-vista-sponsors</a>	P / C / N	State Office must approve your VAD(s) before you can begin recruiting members via MyAmeriCorps
Ensure staff at each site understand the scope of the project and each member's VAD			Training Your Sub-site Supervisors About VADs (DOC) <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/training-your-sub-site-supervisors-about-vads">www.vistacampus.gov/resources/training-your-sub-site-supervisors-about-vads</a>	P / C / N	
Agree on frequency and preferred methods of communication with project partners/sub-sites (e.g., email, phone, face-to-face meetings, site visits, etc.)				P / C / N	

# VISTA Supervisor Tasks

## Rules and Regulations

Tasks	Timeline	Lead	Resources	Status	Notes
Learn VISTA rules and regulations for members and supervisors			<p>VISTA Terms &amp; Conditions (HTML)  <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/lessons/vista-terms-and-conditions">www.vistacampus.gov/lessons/vista-terms-and-conditions</a></p> <p>Benefits of Service (Video, HTML)  <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/in-service/benefits-service">www.vistacampus.gov/in-service/benefits-service</a></p> <p>VISTA Member Handbook (HTML)  <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/lessons/vista-member-handbook">www.vistacampus.gov/lessons/vista-member-handbook</a></p> <p>AmeriCorps VISTA Supervisor Manual (HTML)  <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/lessons/vista-supervisors-manual">www.vistacampus.gov/lessons/vista-supervisors-manual</a></p>	P / C / N	
Confirm currently serving members via the Sponsor Verification Form	Bi-weekly		<p>Completing Sponsor Verification Online (PDF)  <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/completing-sponsor-verification-online-1">www.vistacampus.gov/resources/completing-sponsor-verification-online-1</a></p> <p>Sponsor Verification Dates (PDF)  <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/sponsor-verification-dates">www.vistacampus.gov/resources/sponsor-verification-dates</a></p>	P / C / N	
Adhere to CNCS and AmeriCorps VISTA branding guidelines on all materials, in the media, in letters, and at meetings			<p>Corporation for National &amp; Community Service Logos (HTML)  <a href="http://www.nationalservice.gov/newsroom/marketing/logos">www.nationalservice.gov/newsroom/marketing/logos</a></p> <p>VISTA Products (Link)  <a href="https://pubs.nationalservice.gov/search.aspx?type=1&amp;pid=19">https://pubs.nationalservice.gov/search.aspx?type=1&amp;pid=19</a></p>	P / C / N	
Evaluate your VISTAs' performance regularly			<p>VISTA Member Performance Review Template (DOC)  <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/vista-member-performance-review-template">www.vistacampus.gov/resources/vista-member-performance-review-template</a></p>	P / C / N	
Involve member(s) in data collection and project reporting as appropriate			<p>Involve VISTAs in Reporting (HTML)  <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/involve-vistas-reporting">www.vistacampus.gov/involve-vistas-reporting</a></p>	P / C / N	

# VISTA Supervisor Tasks

## Recruitment & Selection

Tasks	Timeline	Lead	Resources	Status	Notes
Plan member recruitment and selection process			<p>VISTA Campus for Supervisors – Recruiting Planning Resources (HTML)  <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/recruiting-planning-resources">www.vistacampus.gov/recruiting-planning-resources</a></p> <p>Stages of the AmeriCorps VISTA Recruitment Process (PDF)  <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/stages-ameriacorps-vista-recruitment-process">www.vistacampus.gov/resources/stages-ameriacorps-vista-recruitment-process</a></p> <p>Recruitment Team Training and Process Enhancement (PDF)  <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/recruitment-team-training-and-process-enhancement">www.vistacampus.gov/resources/recruitment-team-training-and-process-enhancement</a></p> <p>VISTA Recruitment Checklist (DOC)  <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/vista-recruitment-checklist">www.vistacampus.gov/resources/vista-recruitment-checklist</a></p> <p>VISTA Campus for Supervisors – Recruiting Marketing Resources (HTML)  <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/recruiting-marketing-resources">www.vistacampus.gov/recruiting-marketing-resources</a></p>	P / C / N	Some intermediaries conduct recruitment activities for sub-sites; work together to clarify roles
Screen applicants			<p>VISTA Campus for Supervisors – Recruiting Screening Resources (HTML)  <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/recruiting-screening-resources">www.vistacampus.gov/recruiting-screening-resources</a></p>	P / C / N	
Interview finalists			<p>VISTA Campus for Supervisors – Recruiting Interviewing Resources (HTML)  <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/recruiting-interviewing-resources">www.vistacampus.gov/recruiting-interviewing-resources</a></p>	P / C / N	
Select candidates			<p>Selecting VISTA Members (DOC)  <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/selecting-vista-members">www.vistacampus.gov/resources/selecting-vista-members</a></p>	P / C / N	

# VISTA Supervisor Tasks

## VISTA Member Orientation & Training

Tasks	Timeline	Lead	Resources	Status	Notes
Prepare for VISTAs' arrival – housing, work space, technology, welcome to the community, introduction to VISTA leaders			VISTA Campus for Supervisors – Orienting your VISTA (HTML) <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/supervisors/orienting-your-vista">www.vistacampus.gov/supervisors/orienting-your-vista</a>	P / C / N	
Continue to familiarize yourself with each member's VAD, résumé and IDP (if applicable) after members are selected			VISTA Development Plan (IDP) (PDF) <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/pso-resources-your-vista-development-plan">www.vistacampus.gov/resources/pso-resources-your-vista-development-plan</a>	P / C / N	
Conduct formal On-site Orientation & Training (OSOT) to your site and community			OSOT Checklist (PDF) <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/osot-checklist">www.vistacampus.gov/resources/osot-checklist</a>	P / C / N	Sub-sites work with intermediary to outline a training plan and schedule
Encourage member participation in ongoing training opportunities and self-directed study via the VISTA Campus			VISTA Campus (HTML) <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov">www.vistacampus.gov</a>  Online Courses (HTML) <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/onlinecourses">www.vistacampus.gov/onlinecourses</a>	P / C / N	

# VISTA Supervisor Tasks

## Member Coaching & Support

Tasks	Timeline	Lead	Resources	Status	Notes
Provide ongoing member supervision			Coaching and Supervision Checklist (DOC) <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/coaching-and-supervision-checklist">www.vistacampus.gov/resources/coaching-and-supervision-checklist</a> Successful Member Coaching and Supervision for Sub-site Supervisors (PPTX) <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/successful-member-coaching-and-supervision-sub-site-supervisors">www.vistacampus.gov/resources/successful-member-coaching-and-supervision-sub-site-supervisors</a>	P / C / N	Research has shown frequent one-on-one, in-person meetings with VISTAs are most effective
Offer ideas to help members beat stress			Help Members Make Ends Meet (HTML) <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/help-members-make-ends-meet">www.vistacampus.gov/resources/help-members-make-ends-meet</a> Living on the Living Allowance (On-demand Webinar) <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/living-living-allowance-0">www.vistacampus.gov/resources/living-living-allowance-0</a> National Service Stress Survival Guide (PDF) <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/national-service-stress-survival-guide">www.vistacampus.gov/resources/national-service-stress-survival-guide</a>	P / C / N	
Address issues and conflicts that arise			VISTA Member Support Unit (HTML) <a href="http://questions.nationalservice.gov">questions.nationalservice.gov</a> Supervisor Coaching Scenario (Flash Course) <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/supervisor-coaching-scenario">www.vistacampus.gov/resources/supervisor-coaching-scenario</a> Supervisors Orientation Workbook (PDF): Managing Your VISTA Project – Contacts and Resources <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/supervisor-orientation-workbook">www.vistacampus.gov/resources/supervisor-orientation-workbook</a>	P / C / N	
Prepare members to transition out of service			VISTA Campus for Supervisors – Transitioning (HTML) <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov/supervisors/transitioning">www.vistacampus.gov/supervisors/transitioning</a>	P / C / N	

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# VISTA Supervisor Tasks

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## Next Steps

This Week:

This Month:

## Questions to ask at Supervisor Orientation

## Questions to ask my Corporation State Office (for intermediary sponsors and single-sites)

## Questions to ask my intermediary sponsor (for sub-sites)



Dear VISTA Supervisor:

On behalf of the AmeriCorps VISTA program, I welcome you to the Corporation for National and Community Service, to AmeriCorps VISTA, and to your Supervisor Orientation.

I am continually inspired by the fresh spirit of service and idealism common to those who join VISTA and to the organizations that sponsor VISTA projects. VISTAs are agents of change in low-income communities who bring perhaps the most important resource to organizations and communities: motivated, capable people. I want to thank you for the valuable contributions you will make to the renewal of America.

The VISTA Supervisor Orientation introduces you to VISTA, our mission, history, and policies, and to your roles and responsibilities as a VISTA sponsor and supervisor. It also connects you to a network of other VISTA supervisors who can serve as a valuable resource to you.

Best wishes for an amazing VISTA project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Eileen Conoboy'.

Eileen Conoboy  
Acting Director, AmeriCorps VISTA

## Acknowledgments

This VISTA Supervisor Orientation Workbook is work sponsored wholly, or in part, by the Corporation for National and Community Service, under contract #CNSHQ14F0057. Contents do not necessarily reflect the views of the Corporation for National and Community Service or any agency of the United States government. Permission to reproduce these workbook contents in whole or part for use by educational, national service, or other not-for-profit agencies is granted with the inclusion on all pages of the footer contained herein.

The VISTA National Integrated Training Program is staffed by Education Northwest in partnership with JBS International.

The Education Northwest team wishes to acknowledge the contributions of a core team of curriculum developers and regional team leaders who have helped guide the development and implementation of this work. We also wish to acknowledge our colleagues at the Corporation for National and Community Service, particularly Patrick Triano, Andy King and others on the VISTA training team. We also want to thank the Supervisor Stakeholder Group for their input during our 2014 revisions.

Our thanks from the team at Education Northwest: Amy Cannata, Endi Clark, Jennie Fennelle, Jenny Farrell, Joanne Lau, Nicky Martin, and Rachael Radick.

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# Mission & Supervisor Orientation Goals

## Corporation for National & Community Service Mission Statement

The Corporation's mission is to provide opportunities for Americans of all ages and backgrounds to engage in service that addresses the nation's educational, public safety, environmental, and other human needs to achieve direct and demonstrable results and to encourage all Americans to engage in such service. In doing so, the Corporation will foster civic responsibility, strengthen the ties that bind us together as a people, and provide educational opportunities for those who make a substantial commitment to service.

## VISTA Mission & Legacy

VISTA builds capacity in nonprofit organizations and communities to help bring individuals and communities out of poverty. For over 50 years, VISTA has been helping bring communities and individuals out of poverty. Today, nearly 6,000 VISTA members serve in hundreds of nonprofit organizations and public agencies throughout the country—working to promote literacy, improve health services, create businesses, increase housing opportunities, and bridge the digital divide.

## Goals of VISTA Supervisor Orientation

*By the end of the Supervisor Orientation, supervisors will be able to:*

- Describe the VISTA program and its mission in broad terms
- Gain a better understanding of their role as VISTA Supervisors
- Share learnings with sub-site supervisors so that they are able to support their VISTAs to the best of their ability
- Support VISTAs in their role as capacity builders within their sponsoring organizations
- Articulate how their VISTA project fits in the context of the National Service network
- Locate key resources and contacts within VISTA to facilitate successful reporting and communication between the sponsoring organization and the State Office
- Define and develop a clear, realistic VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)
- Identify the diverse characteristics of the VISTA population
- Effectively recruit, interview and screen VISTA members
- Design and implement an effective On-Site Orientation and Training (OSOT) for the incoming VISTA member(s), and (if applicable) training for sub-site supervisors
- Build and strengthen relationships with VISTAs that result in retention and successful completion of project tasks

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# Core Principles

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## Poverty Focus

The statutory purpose of VISTA is to support efforts to fight poverty. The goal of every project must be to help individuals and communities out of poverty, not simply make poverty more tolerable. VISTA projects should focus on long-term solutions rather than short-term services.

## Sustainable Solutions

As directed by Congress, VISTAs are short-term resources that serve to build the long-term sustainability of anti-poverty programs. VISTA projects should be developed with a goal to phase out the need for VISTA members and maintain the ability of the project to continue without them.

## Community Empowerment

Prospective and current VISTA project sponsors must ensure their project engages low-income community residents in planning, developing, implementing, and evaluating the project. The project must be responsive and relevant to the lives of the community residents, and tap into inherent community assets, strengths, and resources.

## Capacity Building

VISTA projects leverage resources for, or expand the scale, reach, efficiency or effectiveness of, programs or organizations that fight poverty. Rather than providing direct services to low-income individuals and communities, VISTAs strengthen and support organizations by building infrastructure, expanding community partnerships, securing long-term resources, coordinating training for participants, and more as determined by local needs. VISTAs should create systems that remain long after their service ends. VISTA members focus on capacity building activities. They perform limited direct service, which primarily includes activities that address individual clients' immediate needs, under special initiatives.

Furthermore, VISTAs may not engage in activities that would supplant the tasks of, or displace, paid staff, contractors, or existing volunteers. This prohibition includes activities related to the application to and the management of other CNCS grants and programs.

# VISTA Impact Facts

## AmeriCorps VISTA 2017 Accomplishments



**\$206 million**

Cash and in-kind resources generated by AmeriCorps VISTA members, more than doubling every federal dollar invested.



**800,000**

Community volunteers were mobilized to serve over **8 million hours**.



**3 million**

Disadvantaged youth were served.



**140,000**

Veterans and military families were served.



**70%**

VISTAs served in their hometown.



**8,500**

VISTA members served at **more than 4,500 sites** across the U.S.



**220,000+**

Individuals have served as VISTAs since 1965.

# Impacting VISTAs

## Findings from the JBS Competency Study

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) commissioned JBS International to identify the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that individuals need to successfully complete their VADs. The initial model was drafted by a team of workplace competency experts and a working group of VISTA host sites, supervisors, and members.

In total they identified six competency areas: Personal Effectiveness, Academic, Workplace, Program Area Knowledge, VISTA Technical, and VISTA Knowledge Competencies.

### *Most often used Personal Effectiveness Competencies reported by VISTAs:*

**95%**

initiative: working independently

**92%**

personal responsibility

**91%**

interpersonal skills: communicating

**88%**

interpersonal skills: listening

**85%**

ambition

“Members who reported developing competencies through supervision / coaching reported both increased satisfaction and an increased likelihood of completing their VADs.”

“The greatest number of competencies was supported by supervision / coaching and PSO.”

“Member supervision is a key source of competencies needed for VISTA satisfaction and success...”

“Members who said they did not arrive at their position with leadership skills, cited supervision and coaching as the number one resource that helped them develop these skills.”

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# Impacting VISTAs, cont.

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## A Former Member in Her Own Words

“My supervisor believes in the work that she does. Her asset-based approach to management balances creative opportunities for employees to do their respective best work with a long-term vision aligned with the organization’s mission. She not only fostered a work environment in which I could grow and learn, but also helped me in my considerations for graduate school programs and wrote recommendations to help me get there.”

—*Jamie R., former VISTA*

## Reflections on Supervision from VISTA Supervisors

“Being a supervisor takes a lot of time and, if that’s not your main job, you have to make sure you carve time into your schedule to deal with it. Keep that time sacrosanct: Don’t let other kinds of meetings intervene.”

—*Patricia Rivera, Chicago Public Schools Homeless Education, Chicago, IL*

“I wish someone told me how important informal supervision is. Because I’m not there [with my members] everyday, it’s important that I sometimes say, ‘Let’s get a cup of coffee or go for a walk.’ I almost get more out of those sessions than the formal ones.”

—*Melissa Burwell, Minnesota Alliance With Youth Promise Fellows, Minneapolis, MN*

“It’s so much about building relationships. It’s not just the time, but the emotional investment. I didn’t realize [at first] how much supervising would be about establishing and maintaining communications. The flip side of that is you also have to set boundaries. Don’t be so available that people take advantage and you aren’t able to do some of the other work you need to get done.”

—*Karen Mauldin-Curtis, Peace Corps Fellows Program, Macomb, IL*

# Coaching Self Assessment Readiness Quiz

Please reflect on your current confidence and ability to supervise and work with VISTAs in the following four critical coaching areas.

## Critical Coaching Focus Areas

	Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree	
	1	2	3	4	5		
1. I feel confident to coach VISTA members to successfully implement their VISTA Assignment Descriptions (VAD).	1	2	3	4	5		
2. I feel confident to coach my member to help anticipate and address various needs that naturally occur for a member throughout the VISTA cycle of service.	1	2	3	4	5		
3. I feel confident in my ability to coach my member to work with me so that we function together as an effective team.	1	2	3	4	5		
4. I feel confident in my ability to coach a member to develop critical awareness and insights about topics related to community leadership, development, service, content area advocacy, and lifelong service and learning.	1	2	3	4	5		

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# Reflection: Making an Impact

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Review your scores on the Coaching Self Assessment Readiness Quiz and think about what you have learned so far about the impact of your role. Complete the reflection activity using one or more of the prompts.

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## Writing Prompts

How will you move yourself further along the “coaching” scale to score 5 in all areas?

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How do you want to develop as a supervisor?

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What do you want to get out of the VISTA experience?

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Who are your allies and supporters?

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What will you do to focus on self-care during this year of service?

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# VISTA Supervisor Training Program

A series of blended learning experiences designed to build supervisor skills, share field-generated resources and create successful projects and member experiences.



## Pre-Application Campus Study

- VISTA 101
- VISTA 201



## Supervisor Chosen

- Intermediary/single-site awarded VISTA position(s)



## Pre-Work Campus Study

- Create Campus profile
- Review and begin Learning Plan

### Examples:

Information packet, 30 days prior to Supervisor Orientation  
 Terms & Conditions  
 Civil Rights Course



## In-Person Study

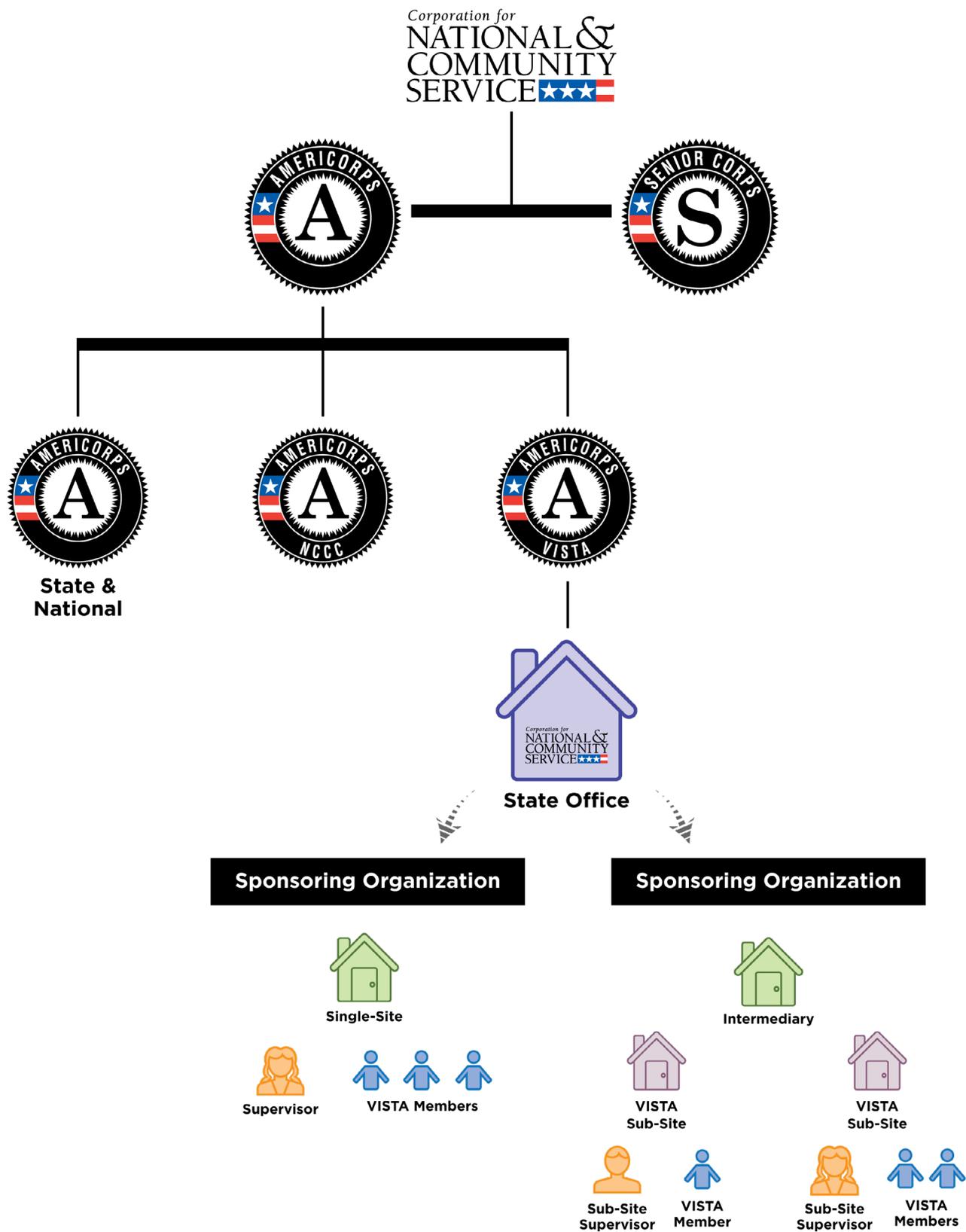
- National orientation & training
- 3 days of facilitated learning and project planning



## Online Offerings

- Continue Learning Plan
- Supervisor Forums
- Corporation State Office page for your state
- Ongoing VISTA Supervisor webinars

# Service Connections



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# VISTA Campus Scavenger Hunt

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Locate the resources on the VISTA Campus that answer the following questions. Write the URLs in the spaces provided.

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## Member Support

1. A VISTA asks you for more details on the VISTA child care benefits. What page on the Campus would you direct her to?  

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2. You oversee a multi-state project and discover that some of your VISTAs in rural areas feel lonely and would like to find other VISTAs in their communities. What tool can they use on the Campus to find other VISTAs and alumni?  

---
3. Your members are in their last quarter of service and need to begin thinking about what they will do next. You would like to find some end-of-service talking points to use during your member check-ins. Where do you find them?  

---
4. Your member has requested personal leave and you need to review the policy on leave. Where do you find the details about leave?  

---
5. One of your members would like to accept a weekend position at the local coffee shop. You want to review the policy on outside employment before saying yes. Where do you find the policy information?  

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# VISTA Campus Scavenger Hunt, cont.

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## Working with sub-sites

1. A sub-site supervisor asks for guidance on how to write a VAD. What resource on the Campus would you direct him to?  

---
2. You need to develop a training for your sub-site supervisors. Where can you find support materials to do so on the Campus?  

---
3. You want to provide a webinar on coaching and supervision for your sub-site supervisors. What resource could you adapt for your webinar?  

---
4. What resource outlines the roles, responsibilities and expectations for VISTA supervisors?  

---

## Training Resources for you, your team, your organization

1. You would like to show the VISTA Legacy video to your Executive Director and colleagues, so they can know more about the VISTA program. Where do you find the video on the Campus?  

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2. You want to point your members and sub-sites to synchronous e-learning opportunities. What is available on the Campus?  

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3. You need to get up to speed on eGrants, where do you find support?  

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4. You heard about the VISTA Leaders Action Learning Challenge resources and want to explore what is available. Where do you find products created by leaders?  

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5. You are curious how other supervisors have structured their OSOT. What tool can you use to reach out to other supervisors to find out?  

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# Capacity Building Definitions

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## Capacity Building

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Tasks and activities to create, expand or strengthen an organization's systems or processes. These tasks and activities include the transfer of knowledge, relationships and products.

## Transfer of Knowledge

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Information gained by the VISTA member during his/her term of service is passed along to other people in an organization in a deliberately designed way.

## Transfer of Products

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Deliverables created by the VISTA member during his/her term of service are passed along to other people in an organization in a deliberately designed way.

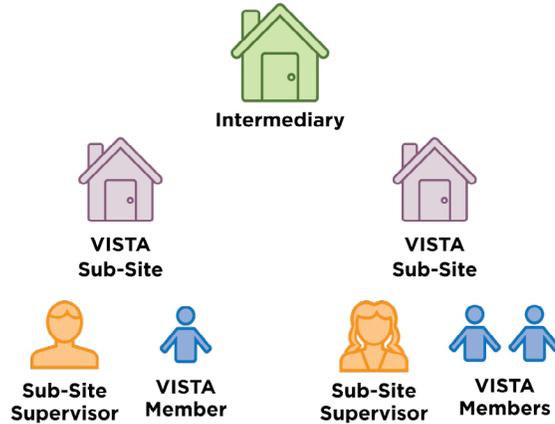
## Transfer of Relationships

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Professional contacts developed by the VISTA member during his/her term of service are passed along to other people in an organization in a deliberately designed way.

# Reporting Roles & Resources

## Sponsoring Organization



## Roles

### Sponsoring Organization (Intermediaries & Single Sites)

- Manages data collection and reporting for all sites
- Cleans and compiles data from all sites
- Submits Sponsor verification form & financials
- Submits project reports quarterly and semi annually via eGrants

### VISTA Sub-sites

- Tracks and collects data using data collection tools provided by project
- Submits data for bi-weekly Sponsor Verification
- Cleans data before sending
- Sends data/reports to Sponsor as indicated by partnership agreement (MOU)

### Members

- Assists with collecting data using data collection tools provided by project

## Guidance & Tools

### VISTA Campus eGrants

[www.vistacampus.gov/supervisors/egrants](http://www.vistacampus.gov/supervisors/egrants)

- Job aids:
  - Creating a New User Account in eGrants
  - Creating a Service Opportunity Listing in eGrants
  - Searching for Applicants in MyAmeriCorps

### AmeriCorps VISTA Performance Measures

[www.nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/vista](http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/vista)

### Reporting Task List

[www.vistacampus.gov/resources/reporting-task-list](http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/reporting-task-list)

### On Demand Webinars

VISTA Campus Connect & Learn

[www.vistacampus.gov/supervisor-webinars](http://www.vistacampus.gov/supervisor-webinars)

- eGrants Demystified: The Insider's Guide
- Reporting Roles and Responsibilities for AmeriCorps VISTA Projects

# VAD Sample (Needs Revision)

<b>TITLE</b>	Mentor Recruitment and Management Systems Designer
<b>SPONSORING ORGANIZATION</b>	Waketa Community Services (WCS)
<b>PROJECT NAME</b>	MentorCorps
<b>PROJECT NUMBER</b>	12ABCD345
<b>PROJECT PERIOD</b>	08/20/20XX - 08/19/20YY
<b>SITE NAME</b>	<i>if applicable</i>
<b>FOCUS AREA(S)</b>	Education (Primary)
<b>NOTE</b>	If your VAD is not accepted, the State Office will note the reason(s) why here.

## VISTA Assignment Objectives & Member Activities

<b>PROJECT GOAL</b>	<i>To help ensure children of incarcerated parents receive the educational, social, and emotional support they need to 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.</i>
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	Assess the current state of WCS' efforts in reaching, selecting, and supporting volunteer mentors. Create or revise policies, procedures, and documents to improve the effectiveness of the mentor recruitment and matching system.
<b>MEMBER ACTIVITIES</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Research the history of volunteer programs at WCS. Develop a written plan improve volunteer programs at WCS..</li> <li>2. Refine or develop systems for screening and matching mentors. Create new documents that would support internal policies and procedures regarding mentor recruitment and matching.             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Create a system to track mentor process</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	Set up outreach systems and build partnerships with community organizations to spread the word about the mentor program.
<b>MEMBER ACTIVITIES</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Plan for outreach and recruitment.             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Write volunteer task descriptions.</li> <li>b. Attend community events.</li> <li>c. Identify new community partnerships.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Market the program to targeted audiences.             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Develop and send marketing emails to partners.</li> <li>b. Identify and use social media outlets.</li> <li>c. Create a system for organizing all new marketing materials.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

# VAD Sample (Accepted)

<b>TITLE</b>	Mentor Recruitment and Management Systems Designer
<b>SPONSORING ORGANIZATION</b>	Waketa Community Services (WCS)
<b>PROJECT NAME</b>	MentorCorps
<b>PROJECT NUMBER</b>	12ABCD345
<b>PROJECT PERIOD</b>	08/20/20XX - 08/19/20YY
<b>SITE NAME</b>	<i>if applicable</i>
<b>FOCUS AREA(S)</b>	Education (Primary)
<b>NOTE</b>	If your VAD is not accepted, the State Office will note the reason(s) why here.

## VISTA Assignment Objectives & Member Activities

<b>PROJECT GOAL</b>	<i>To help ensure that children of incarcerated parents receive the educational, social, and emotional support they need to 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.</i>
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	By December 20, 20XX, assess the current state of WCS' efforts in reaching, selecting, and supporting volunteer mentors and create or revise policies, procedures, and documents to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of the mentor recruitment and matching system.
<b>MEMBER ACTIVITIES</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Research the history of volunteer programs at WCS.             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Review and become familiar with internal policies, procedures, and documents related to the mentor recruitment and matching system by September 20, 20XX. Identify the current program's strengths and challenges.</li> <li>b. In collaboration with WCS leadership, develop a written plan for improvement by October 20, 20XX.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Refine or develop systems for screening and matching mentors.             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Develop or revise documents related to internal policies and procedures regarding mentor recruitment and matching by November 20, 20XX.</li> <li>b. If needed, participate in online training on how to build a database in Excel by November 20, 20XX.</li> <li>c. Create WCS Excel database to track mentor screening and matching by December 20, 20XX.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	By 8/19/20YY, set up outreach systems and build partnerships with community organizations—and then develop targeted marketing materials—to spread the word about the mentor program.
<b>MEMBER ACTIVITIES</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Plan for outreach and recruitment.             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Identify the skills, abilities, and experiences sought in volunteer mentors by January 30, 20YY.</li> <li>b. Write volunteer task descriptions that include qualifications, activities, benefits, the time commitment, and other expectations by February 28, 20YY.</li> <li>c. Attend 10 community events, as well as identify and develop partnerships with 10 community organizations whose members are possible mentors or who can otherwise support the organization, by March 30, 20YY. Continue to update the internal database to track mentor screening and matching.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Market the program to targeted audiences.             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Develop community organization-specific marketing emails by May 15, 20YY.</li> <li>b. Design marketing materials to post on five social media sites by May 31, 20YY.</li> <li>c. Create WCS marketing binder / electronic folder with updated marketing materials by June 30, 20YY.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

# VAD Checklist & Feedback

## General information

Title *(Includes VISTA's role and the word "VISTA")*

Project Period *(List the year of the project)*

Name of Sponsoring Organization

Site Name

Project Name

Focus Area(s)

Project Number

## Does the project goal

Address poverty by VISTA efforts

Define how the VISTAs activities will build capacity

Describe who (population) will be served

State the specific product or service resulting from VISTA efforts

Include verbs to describe the VISTAs activities

## Do the project objective(s)

Identify what the VISTA will achieve

Includes date ranges

Describe the outcome of a set of activities

Use active verbs

Aligns with the goal statement

## Do the member activities

Specify what VISTAs will be doing to achieve the objective(s)

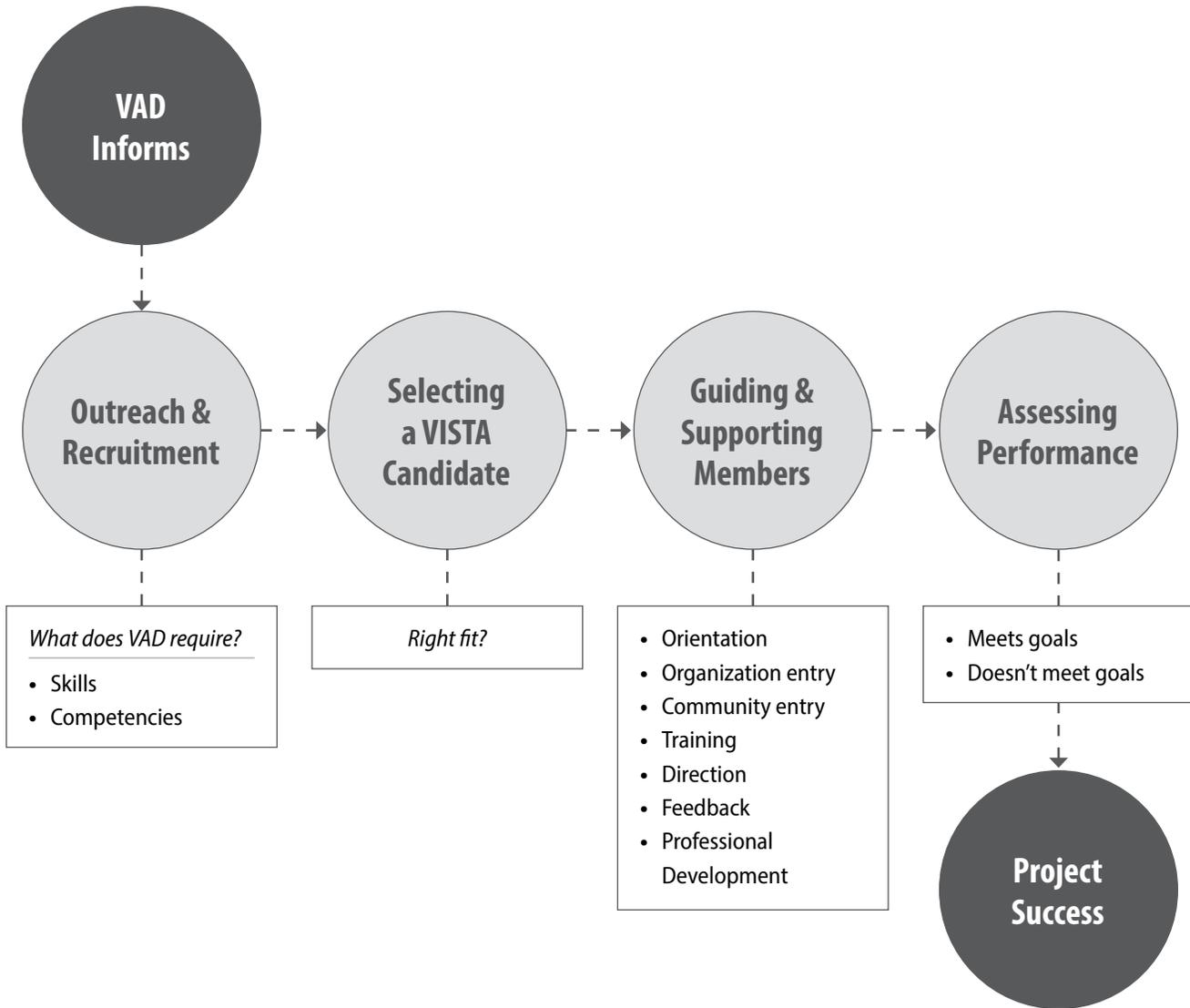
Includes date ranges

Aligns with the objective

Use active verbs

## Recommended Changes

# VAD Informs



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# VAD Stations Activity Instructions

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**Directions for all stations:**

1. Read the brief introduction to your station activity.
  2. Follow the steps outlined in the individual station activities below and access the workbook for related worksheets.
- 

## 1. Complete VAD Tutorial

Prepare to write your VADs. Begin by watching the “Creating Effective VADs” tutorial on the VISTA Campus and learn the necessary background for creating a VAD, the VAD’s key elements, and how the VAD can be used for managing the project. Then begin to create one or more VADs for your project.

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1. Log on to VISTA Campus at: [www.vistacampus.gov](http://www.vistacampus.gov) and go to the “Creating Effective VADs.” You will find it under: Supervisors – The VISTA Assignment. Use this link if you cannot find it: [www.vistacampus.gov/resources/creating-effective-vads](http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/creating-effective-vads)
  2. Watch the “Creating Effective VADs” tutorial (approx. 10 minutes). Use the “VAD Worksheet” in your workbook to take notes as you go through the course.
  3. Discuss what you learned with members of your group. Or begin creating your VAD with the VAD Template that you can download at the end of the course. You can also find a copy of the Template on “The VISTA Assignment” page of the Campus.
- 

## 2. Plan to Train Sub-Site Supervisors on Using VADs at their Sub-Sites

Discuss and plan how to best train your sub-site supervisors to use VADs at their sites and throughout the project.

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1. Log on to VISTA Campus at: [www.vistacampus.gov](http://www.vistacampus.gov) and go to the “Training Your Sub-Site Supervisors About VADs” worksheet. You will find it under: Supervisors – The VISTA Assignment. Use this link if you cannot find it: [www.vistacampus.gov/resources/training-your-sub-site-supervisors-about-vads](http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/training-your-sub-site-supervisors-about-vads). Download and save the worksheet to your computer.
  2. Use the worksheet to plan how you’ll orient your sub-site supervisors on the VAD. Think about key points you’ll make in each of the categories, as well as how to best communicate these points and what VISTA Campus resources can assist you in presenting the material.
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# VAD Stations Activity Instructions, cont.

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3. Identify possible activities or methods of presenting this information.
  4. Explore VAD resources and identify resources (on the Campus) you can use to help convey critical points.
- 

## 3. Inherited VAD

Discuss the challenges of “inheriting” a VAD that you didn’t create and begin planning your next steps for “owning” it or adapting it, if necessary, to meet your needs.

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1. Begin by sharing and discussing your challenges with inheriting a VAD.
  2. Using the “Inherited VAD” worksheet in your workbook, answer, as a group, the questions listed and jot down your responses in the space provided.
- 

## 4. Using the VAD in Your Project

Discuss and plan how to use the VAD at your sites, throughout the VISTA project. (For single-site supervisors and sub-site supervisors)

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1. Write down what you think are the most important issues related to using VADs at your site; then discuss briefly with your group.
  2. Log on to VISTA Campus at: [www.vistacampus.gov](http://www.vistacampus.gov) and go to the “Using VADs Throughout your Project” worksheet. You will find it under: Supervisors – The VISTA Assignment. Use this link if you cannot find it: [www.vistacampus.gov/resources/using-vads-throughout-your-project](http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/using-vads-throughout-your-project). Download and save the worksheet to your computer.
  3. Use the worksheet to begin creating a plan for using the VAD at your site by:
    - Identifying possible activities or methods of using the VAD in each area specified
    - Identifying resources (on the Campus) you can use to convey key points
-

# VAD Worksheet

*Title:*

## Project Details

## Goal of the Project

## Objectives

(Due Date)

## Activities

(Due Date)

---

# Inherited VAD

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*Important questions to ask about an inherited VAD:*

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1. What do you think is effective in this VAD?

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2. What do you think could be improved?

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3. How would you re-work the activities?

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4. What member skills and backgrounds do you want for the next cohort you recruit that you do not have yet?

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# Supervisor Questions for VISTA Members

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To help inform your recruitment and On-Site Orientation and Training plan, use this tool to gather perspectives on these topics from VISTA candidates.

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## Recruitment

1. How did you first hear about VISTA? How did you hear about the program you will serve with?

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2. What convinced you to apply to be a VISTA? What recruitment strategies worked with you? If you were going to recruit new VISTAs, how would you do it?

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3. How do you think we could recruit a more diverse pool of VISTAs?

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## Member Professional Development

1. How do you hope to grow/develop during your VISTA year?

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2. What do you hope to learn about poverty during your year?

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# Getting the Word Out: Inclusive Recruitment Avenues

## In-person

Diverse community events

Local Urban Leagues

Local cultural centers

Career or job fairs

Workforce centers

College recruitment offices

Word of mouth to friends  
and family

Word of mouth to current or  
former VISTAs

Word of mouth to colleagues  
and similar organizations

Flyers posted in the community

## Electronic & Traditional Media

Email announcement to  
colleagues

Email announcement to  
similar organizations

Diverse job boards

Posting on my organization's  
website

Twitter post

Facebook post

LinkedIn post

Ad in newspaper

Ad or announcement in  
professional journals or  
newsletters

## Websites

My AmeriCorps  
(my.americorps.gov)

Hands On Network Local  
Action Center  
(www.pointsoflight.  
org/handsonnetwork/  
where-we-work)

VolunteerMatch.org

Craigslist.org

Idealist.org

Indeed.com

Workforgood.org

Monster.com

LinkedIn.com

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# Your Local Recruitment Landscape

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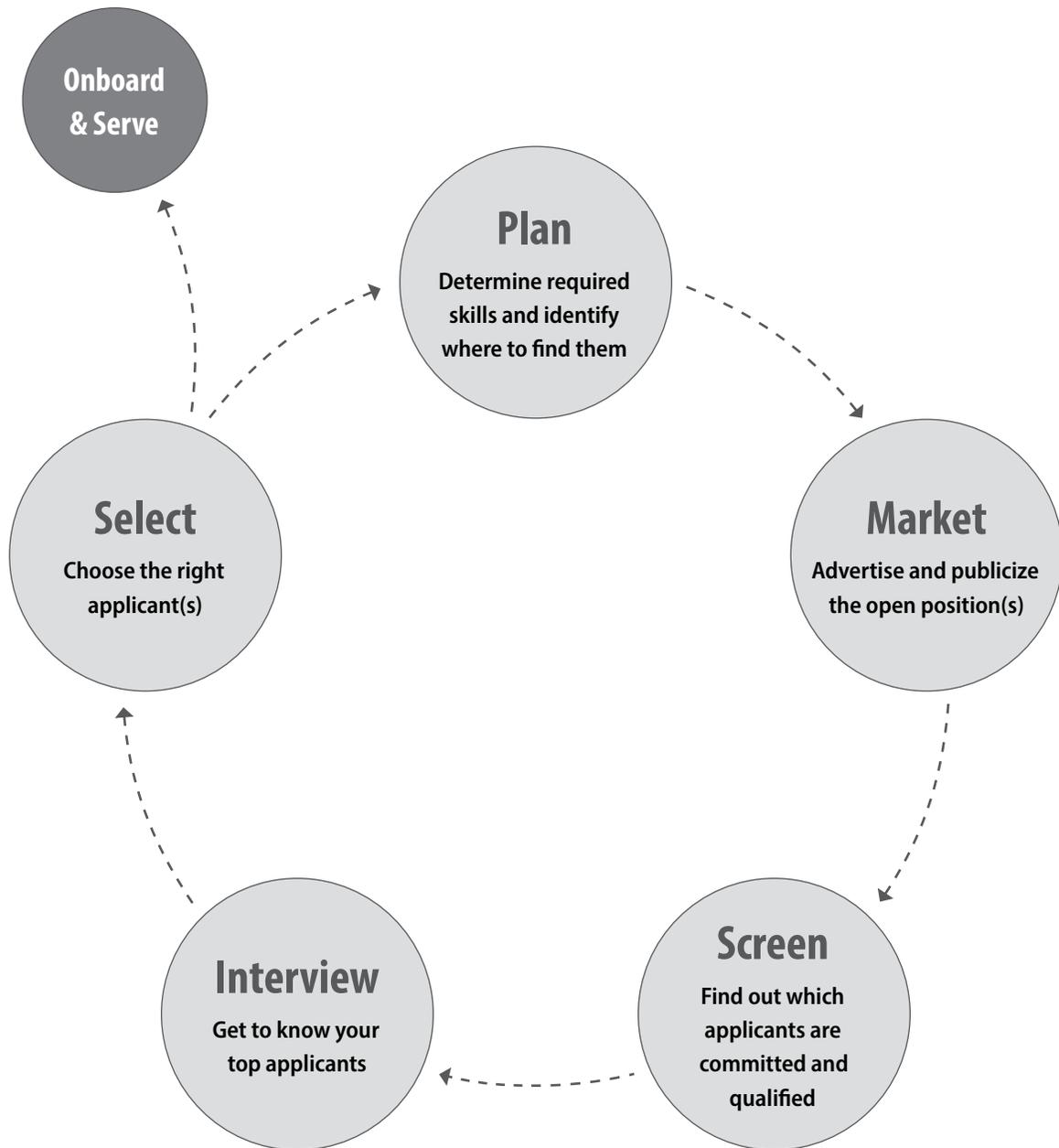
1. What other VISTA positions are available in your area?
2. Who else is seeking members in your region or city?
3. What are the criteria and application requirements?
4. How does your position announcement compare to others?
5. Does your position statement indicate why diversity and inclusion is important to your organization?
6. Does your position announcement provide information about the diverse groups being served by your organization?
7. Does the position announcement need to be translated into other languages?

# Sample Two-Line Teasers



FOCUS	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION
International	Arizona	Do you have an interest in international affairs and humanitarian efforts? The Arizona Refugee Resettlement Program is recruiting for a Health Care Coordinator to benefit refugees in Arizona.
Youth	Various	Join a new VISTA program with the US Department of Interior (DOI). Work in a national park or wildlife refuge to foster economic development, healthy futures, and programs for at-risk youth.
Education, Youth	Utah	Big Picture is a high school that inspires and empowers low-income students to make their education individualized, real-world, and rigorous, using projects, internships, travel, and service.
Education	Washington	Got FUN? The Bookmobile supports a fun bunch of people, books, activities and connections. Its library outreach programs support folks in two rural counties.
Arts, Education, Environment	Vermont	The Willowell Foundation, based on 230 acres in Monkton, Vermont, connects people with the arts, education, the environment, and each other through land-based programs.
Poverty	New York	Affordable-housing nonprofit will begin research to show that providing housing for the homeless costs the public less than providing support services while they live on the street.
Poverty, Youth	Georgia	Peach County 4-H in Ft. Valley, GA, needs YOU to fight poverty with passion through 4-H—the largest positive youth development organization in the world!
Education, Youth	Minnesota	Join a dedicated team of hard-working professionals and help to further develop and expand an in-school literacy tutoring program for at-risk youth in kindergarten through 2nd grade.
Education, Health	Oregon	Apple Seeds inspires healthy living through garden-based education. Our Farm Program Coordinator will assist the Farm Manager as well as others in development and capacity building at our Teaching Farm.

# Stages of AmeriCorps VISTA Recruitment



Developed by the Summer 2013 Recruitment Action Learning Challenge Team:

- Stanley Brajer, Kevin Gong, Andrea Grant, Regan Stark, and Sam Rigotti

- Coach: Kapila Wewegama

# Recruitment Checklist

*VISTA member recruitment is a multi-step process that can be both rewarding and challenging. Use this set of sample activities to create a customized process that fits your structure and policies.*

## Plan

- Outline steps in your marketing, screening, interviewing, and selection process
- Create your recruitment task list
- Draft your recruitment timeline
- Set up tracking systems
- Identify staff and their roles
- Prepare supplemental questionnaires, interview questions, and program information to share with applicants
- Ensure you have access to eGrants and the ability to complete required recruitment tasks.

## Market

- Complete, submit, and get approval for your VAD(s) from your CNCS State Office
- Brainstorm personal, professional and cultural competencies that match your organizational needs and the VAD
- Imagine potential VISTA(s) for your program, and tailor your outreach and opportunity listings towards this ideal
- Identify strategies to reach potential candidates who match the personal, professional and cultural competencies you are looking for
- Identify recruitment sources that reflect the diversity of your community
- Develop your message and write your Opportunity Listing for My AmeriCorps based on your list of competencies, inclusiveness, the VAD, and your ideal candidate profile
- Submit and get approval for your Opportunity Listing from your CNCS State Office
- Post your Opportunity Listing on My AmeriCorps
- Cast a wide net to advertise your position (via word-of-mouth, online, print, etc.) based on your list of locations to find candidates who match the personal and professional competencies you need
- Be prepared to market your program to potential candidates; they will be interviewing you too

# Recruitment Checklist, cont.

## Screen

- Prepare your benefits and limitations of service (terms and conditions) information to share during pre-screening activities
- Conduct pre-screening activities (e.g., pre-screen phone calls, applicant Living Allowance sample budget, commitment scale ratings)
- Round 1: Narrow your list of applicants
- Apply your screening and selection criteria to narrow your list of applicants (i.e., do they meet the position requirements identified by your program, did they complete all required steps, are all documents accounted for and complete, did they stay in touch, did they complete tasks in a timely manner)
- Work with sub-sites to identify where each VISTA will serve
- Round 2: Narrow your list of applicants
- Review and rate applicants and materials
- Round 3: Narrow your list of applicants

## Interview

- Conduct interviews round 1
- Conduct interviews round 2
- Identify top picks and back-up candidates

## Select

- Conduct reference checks
- Offer your candidate(s) a position
- Outline next steps for the candidate including a timeline for when service will start and required documentation
- Inform the VISTA candidate of required next steps:
  1. Create a Travel Request Profile in My.Americorps.gov to register for Pre-Service Orientation
  2. Complete direct deposit paperwork for living stipend and other payments from CNCS, as well as other paperwork
  3. Create a VISTACampus.gov log in, and complete the PSO preparation web activities
  4. Print out a copy of their VAD to bring to PSO
- Retain the member you have selected before they arrive for service by checking in on a weekly basis, and making sure that documentation is turned in on time

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# VISTA Recruitment Stations

## Activity Instructions

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**Directions for all stations:**

1. Read the brief introduction to your station activity.
  2. Follow the steps outlined in the individual station activities below and access the workbook for related worksheets
- 

### 1. Plan Station Instructions

Planning is stage one of the recruitment process. In this stage you will articulate recruitment tasks, timelines, outreach methods, staffing and more to ensure a successful recruitment process. In this activity you will begin your recruitment plan.

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1. Log on to VISTA Campus at: [www.vistacampus.gov](http://www.vistacampus.gov) and access the “Creating a Recruitment Plan” resource at: [www.vistacampus.gov/resources/creating-recruitment-plan](http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/creating-recruitment-plan) and review the document.
  2. After reviewing the “Creating a Recruitment Plan” document, scan other resources in the “Recruiting” section of supervisor area of the VISTA Campus. Your group may want to divvy up the section pages and have each person review a different topic.
  3. Discuss what you read, including how you might use this information, and what you found with the members of your group.
  4. Complete the worksheet found in the “Creating a Recruitment Plan” resource.
- 

### 2. Market Station Instructions

Marketing for recruitment is stage two of the recruitment process. In this stage you will identify the attributes that will be most effective for your position and what members need to succeed to ensure the right fit. In this activity you will craft a recruitment posting.

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1. Log on to VISTA Campus at: [www.vistacampus.gov](http://www.vistacampus.gov) and access the “Marketing for Recruitment” resource at: [www.vistacampus.gov/resources/marketing-recruitment](http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/marketing-recruitment) and review the document.
-

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# VISTA Recruitment Stations

## Activity Instructions, cont.

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2. Review the following VISTA marketing resources for later use:
    - VISTA Branded Materials: posters, brochures
      - <https://pubs.nationalservice.gov> (order)
      - [www.nationalservicegear.org](http://www.nationalservicegear.org) (order)
    - VISTA Marketing and Media: logos, fact sheets, and media guide
      - [www.nationalservice.gov/newsroom/outreach](http://www.nationalservice.gov/newsroom/outreach) (download)
  3. Discuss what you read and reviewed, including how you might use this information, with the members of your group.
  4. Complete the “Successful Candidates Attributes Worksheet” and “VISTA Recruitment Posting Worksheet” in the “Marketing for Recruitment” resource.
- 

### 3. Screen Station Instructions

Screening is stage three of the recruitment process. In this stage you will find out which candidates are committed and qualified to be VISTA members. In this activity you will outline specific screening criteria for your project.

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1. Log on to VISTA Campus at: [www.vistacampus.gov](http://www.vistacampus.gov) and access the “Screening VISTA Applicants” resource at: [www.vistacampus.gov/recruiting-screening-resources](http://www.vistacampus.gov/recruiting-screening-resources) and review the document.
  2. Then review:
    - Siena College Prescreening Form (Word) at:  
[www.vistacampus.gov/file.php/50/CampusToursforSupervisors/SienaCollege\\_VISTAPrescreeningForm.doc](http://www.vistacampus.gov/file.php/50/CampusToursforSupervisors/SienaCollege_VISTAPrescreeningForm.doc)
    - Criminal History Checks for VISTAs and Leaders – Sponsor Responsibilities (PDF) at:  
[www.vistacampus.gov/recruiting-screening-resources](http://www.vistacampus.gov/recruiting-screening-resources)
  3. Discuss what you read, including how you might use this information, with the members of your group.
  4. Complete the “Screening Criteria Worksheet” in the “Screening VISTA Applicants” resource.
-

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# VISTA Recruitment Stations

## Activity Instructions, cont.

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### 4. Interview Station Instructions

Interviewing is stage four of the recruitment process. In this stage you will prepare for VISTA interviews, develop interview questions, and refine interview techniques. In this activity you will learn about conducting interviews, review sample interview questions, and practice interviewing techniques.

1. Log on to VISTA Campus at: [www.vistacampus.gov](http://www.vistacampus.gov) and access the “Interviewing VISTA Applicants” resource at: [www.vistacampus.gov/resources/interviewing-vista-applicants](http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/interviewing-vista-applicants) and review the document.
2. Then review “How to Conduct a Successful Behavioral Interview” and “Sample Questions: Behavioral Interview.” Note the following resources for later use: “Preparing for a VISTA Interview Checklist” and “Illegal Interview Questions.”
3. Practicing Interview Skills
  - a. Pair up and choose roles: interviewer and candidate
  - b. Select 2-4 questions from the “Sample Questions: Behavioral Interview” list to ask during a practice session.
  - c. Listen to the candidate responses and practice giving positive feedback when a question is answered well and empathy when you see the candidate is expressing an area she would consider a challenge (or an area she has struggled with). Ask follow-up questions to clarify the challenge.
  - d. Once you are finished debrief the experience with your partner.
  - e. Then choose 2-4 different questions and repeat the process in opposite roles.
  - f. With your partner, discuss what went well and what you might change when you interview your VISTA candidates.

### 5. Select Station Instructions

Selection is stage five of the recruitment process. In this stage you will select the best-qualified VISTA candidate and complete steps to officially bring them on board. In this activity you will review selection steps and begin outlining your selection process.

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# VISTA Recruitment Stations

## Activity Instructions, cont.

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1. Log on to VISTA Campus at: [www.vistacampus.gov](http://www.vistacampus.gov) and access the “Selecting VISTA Members” resource at: [www.vistacampus.gov/resources/selecting-vista-members](http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/selecting-vista-members) and review the document.
  2. Then download and review the “VISTA Acceptance Letter (DOC)” at: [www.vistacampus.gov/resources/vista-acceptance-letter](http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/vista-acceptance-letter)
  3. Discuss what you read, including how you might use this information, with the members of your group.
  4. Complete the “VISTA Selection Process Worksheet” in the “Selecting VISTA Members” resource.
- 

### 6. Team Training & Process Enhancement Station Instructions

Recruitment process enhancement and team training affect all stages of the recruitment cycle but generally fall within the planning stage. Recruitment planning is an ongoing process so if you have already recruited members for this year, this activity will help you refine your recruitment process or think through other recruitment models. In this activity you will use a set of prompts to evaluate your current recruitment process and/or review models for distributing recruitment tasks.

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1. Log on to VISTA Campus at: [www.vistacampus.gov](http://www.vistacampus.gov) and access the “Recruitment Team Training and Process Enhancement” resource at: [www.vistacampus.gov/resources/recruitment-team-training-and-process-enhancement](http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/recruitment-team-training-and-process-enhancement) and review the document.
  2. Discuss what you read, including how you might use this information, with the members of your group.
  3. If time permits, scan other resources in the “Recruiting” section of supervisor area of the VISTA Campus. Your group may want to divvy up the section pages and have each person review a different topic.
  4. Complete the “Recruitment To Do List” in your workbook with a focus on training your recruitment team and/or outlining refinements that you want to make to your process.
-

# Illegal Interview Questions

Various federal, state, and local laws regulate the questions a prospective employer can ask a job applicant. The sponsoring agency's questions—on the job application, in the interview (whether that be in-person, by phone or internet) or during any testing process—must be related to the position for which the applicant is applying. The focus must be on: ***What do I need to know to decide whether or not this person can perform the functions of this position?***

Questions should be position-related and not used to find out personal information. The sponsoring agency should not be asking questions about a person's:

race	religion	age	ethnic background	sexual orientation
gender	marital status	disabilities	nationality	arrest record

## Examples

### Age

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| <b>Illegal</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How old are you?</li> <li>• When did you graduate from college?</li> <li>• What is your birthday?</li> </ul> |
| <b>Legal</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you over the age of 18?</li> </ul>   |

### Nationality

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| <b>Illegal</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you a U.S. citizen?</li> <li>• Where were you/your parents born?</li> <li>• What is your 'native tongue'?</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Legal</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you authorized to work in the United States?</li> <li>• What languages do you read, speak, or write fluently?*</li> </ul> <p><i>*This question is okay as long as it is relevant to performance of position.</i></p> |

# Illegal Interview Questions, cont.

## Examples, cont.

### Marital / Family Status

#### Illegal

- What is your marital status?
- Who do you live with?
- Do you plan to have a family? When?
- How many children do you have?
- What are your child care arrangements?

#### Legal

- Would you be willing to relocate if necessary?
- Travel is an important part of the position. Would you be willing to travel as needed to carry out the job's responsibilities?\*
- The VISTA position is full time. Would you be willing and able to work longer than 8 hours a day, or weekends, if necessary?\*

\*These questions okay as long as all applicants for position are asked them.

### Arrest Record

#### Illegal

- Have you ever been arrested?

#### Legal

- Have you ever been convicted of \_\_?\*

\*Crime should be reasonably related to performance of job in question.

### Disabilities

#### Illegal

- Do you have any disabilities?
- Please complete the following medical history.
- Have you had any recent or past illnesses or surgeries? If yes, list and give dates. What was the date of your last physical exam?
- How is your family's health?
- When did you lose your eyesight?

#### Legal

- Are you able to perform the essential functions of this position with or without reasonable accommodations?\*

\*To ask this, interviewer must have provided job description and/or thoroughly described job position.

*In general, the interviewee is under no obligation to answer any question that is not assignment-related. If s/he chooses not to answer an unrelated assignment question, this cannot be held against them, nor can the sponsoring agency choose not to select an applicant because they have answered the question in an undesirable way. In either case, not selecting the applicant for not answering the question, or because you were not satisfied with the answer, is considered discriminatory.*



# Core Competencies

Place a **STAR** (\*) by the competencies that are essential for the success of your project (and for the success of the VISTA within your organization)—those you can't live without!

Place a **PLUS** (+) by the competencies that you hope your VISTAs will bring with them to service.

Place a **DELTA** (△) by the competencies you can train your VISTAs in once they are recruited.

BASIC WORK COMPETENCIES		VISTA SPECIFIC COMPETENCIES	
<b>TIER 1</b>	<b>Personal Effectiveness</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interpersonal Skills</li> <li>Initiative</li> <li>Personal Responsibility</li> <li>Ambition</li> <li>Adaptability &amp; Flexibility</li> <li>Leadership</li> <li>Willingness to Learn</li> </ol>	<b>TIER 4</b>	<b>Technical Skills</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning &amp; Collaboration</li> <li>Resource Management</li> <li>Organizational Development</li> <li>Volunteer Management</li> <li>Evaluation</li> </ol>
<b>TIER 2</b>	<b>Academic</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reading</li> <li>Writing</li> <li>Mathematics</li> <li>Science, Technology &amp; Computer Skills</li> <li>Communication: Listening &amp; Speaking</li> <li>Critical &amp; Analytical Thinking</li> </ol>	<b>TIER 5</b>	<b>VISTA Knowledge</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding VISTA</li> <li>Life as a VISTA</li> <li>VISTA Placement &amp; VAD</li> <li>Community Outreach &amp; Marketing</li> <li>Resource Mobilization</li> <li>Community Capacity Building for Sustainability</li> </ol>
<b>TIER 3</b>	<b>Workplace</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Networking</li> <li>Planning &amp; Organizing</li> <li>Problem Solving &amp; Decision Making</li> <li>Documentation</li> <li>Organizational Fundamentals</li> </ol>	<b>UPPER</b>	<b>Program Area Knowledge</b> <p><i>Specific topics such as:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children &amp; Youth</li> <li>Disaster Recovery</li> <li>Education</li> <li>Entrepreneurship</li> <li>Eldercare</li> <li>Ex-offenders</li> <li>Environment</li> </ul>

*Adapted from JBS International, Inc. (May 2013), VISTA Training Assessment Summary of Findings.*

Before working on the Individual Development Plan (IDP), reflect on the ways you can make the discussion more beneficial for both you and your VISTA:

# VISTA Individual Development Plan

Each VISTA member who attends an in-person PSO creates an individual development plan. It is a tailored action plan to develop specific competencies (knowledge and skills) needed to succeed in their VISTA position and to prepare for their new responsibilities. This plan can be used as a template to guide goals and professional development needs for members that complete the Virtual Member Orientation.

Knowledge & Skills Needed to Accomplish the VAD	Priority <i>LMH</i>	Learning Opportunities & Resources	Type <i>(see below)</i>	Timeframe <i>(mo/yr)</i>

PRIORITY: L = Low M = Medium H = High

TYPE OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITY: 1 = Online 2 = In-person 3 = Informal 4 = Other

# Communication Styles Case Study

## Section 1

Two VISTAs, Rachelle and Jake, work directly with one supervisor, Sally. Both Rachelle and Jake are recent college graduates and excited to be VISTAs. Sally is new at supervising entry-level staff members and has acknowledged that this will be a learning process for her.

Sally scheduled an On-Site Orientation and Training (OSOT), starting at 8 am, to cover all the needed details. She spends most of her time out of the office with external stakeholders, so this was the one time she had available to orient Rachelle and Jake. Sally started the meeting at 8 am. She spent the first ten minutes talking about her weekend trip with her family. She asked Rachelle and Jake about their weekends. She then asked both of them how they were feeling after their week at PSO. At about 8:45 am, Sally started into the agenda.

Sally spent the entire day working with the VISTAs, going over all relevant policies and answering questions about their VADs. At the end of the day, Sally said, "I've got meetings the rest of the week. Just send me an email if something comes up. Let's plan to check in a month from now. How does that sound?" Rachelle felt overwhelmed. She expected more frequent check-ins, but didn't say anything. Jake just said, "Okay" and left the meeting.

## Section 2

A couple of months later, Sally held a meeting with Jake, Rachelle, her assistant, Remy, and John, a community volunteer working on fundraising. Sally explained that Jake and Rachelle would be updating the organization's donor database by mailing and collecting donor information forms. Jake thought there might be a faster way to manage the project—an idea that was pretty much the opposite of how Sally said to do it. He spoke up, saying: "I would probably go about that differently. Like, what about if we go directly to the donors to get their updated email addresses, instead of having them fill out the form?" Sally quickly responded, "Well, this is the way we've been doing it for three years and it has worked fine."

Jake responded, "I disagree with you. I think it will take more time in the long run to do it this way."

Unfortunately, the database project went awry. Jake filled in the wrong fields in an Excel file that Rachelle sent out to the organization's board of directors. Remy (Sally's assistant) worked with Jake and Rachelle to remedy the situation and within two hours, the data file was corrected and sent out again. Later, Sally sent an email to Jake about what happened. At the end of her message Sally wrote, "Jake, I am deeply disappointed. You made a major mistake with the data."

# Communication Styles



- People say what they mean and mean what they say.
- It's important to be direct and tell it like it is.
- The truth is more important than sparing someone's feelings.

- People are indirect; they imply/suggest what they mean.
- You need to read between the lines.
- Telling the truth, if it hurts, should be tempered.



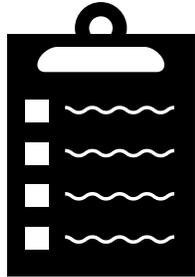
- The facts and expediency are more important than being careful about what you say.
- Getting/giving information is the overriding goal of the communication exchange.
- It's okay to say 'no' and confront or criticize people.

- Maintaining harmony is the overriding goal of the communication exchange.
- Confrontation, criticism, and saying no are avoided or handled delicately.
- What one says and what one feels often are not the same.

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# Communication Styles, cont.

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TASK AT HAND



FOCUS



PERSON



- Do business first and then have small talk.
- Establishing rapport and a good personal relationship are not essential to getting the job done.
- The goal is accomplishing the task.

- Begin with small talk and then move to business.
- A personal relationship is a prerequisite to getting the job done.
- The goal is building the relationship.

# Guidelines for Conducting Effective Conferences & Giving Feedback

## Guidelines for Conducting Effective Conferences

- Make sure they are regular, ongoing, and frequent enough (weekly if possible)
- One-on-one is best
- Make them practical/useful to both of you
- Provide useful direction
- Provide affirming and constructive feedback
- Include elements to promote growth and discovery

## Guidelines for Giving Feedback

### Positive Feedback

Disregard everything you've heard to the effect that you don't have to say anything if things go well, just when they are messed up! Praising people for a job well done is both motivating and useful. It makes the other person feel valued and appreciated and it guides him/her for future actions and contributions.

It is especially important to pay attention to your communication style when giving positive feedback. The more direct and specific you are, the clearer the feedback will be. For example, if you say, "That was fantastic!" the other person will feel good, but will he/she know what was fantastic about what he/she did or why you felt it was fantastic?

#### *Model:*

- State specifically what you liked
- State why—its effect on the organization, you, the community, etc.

### Constructive Feedback

Giving constructive feedback is part of your responsibility as supervisor to keep performance on track. It is a task that, when performed well, can have a very positive outcome. It can be a crucial step in the learning and growing process.

Again, keep in mind your communication style. Context is everything. Build on your relationship. Kind honesty is usually the best approach.

#### *Model:*

- State what you liked (if there were positive aspects of his/her performance)
- State specifically what needs to be improved
- State why—provide context (for all involved)
- Engage in a discussion
- Agree on a resolution

# One-on-one Meetings with VISTA members

## When

- **First month of service:** Weekly with each VISTA member
- **Latter months:** Biweekly with each VISTA member
- **Whenever the VISTA members need to meet!**

## Duration

- **10 minutes** for the VISTA member
- **10 minutes** for you
- **10 minutes** for professional development

## Where

- The key is **not in public**; it does **not** have to be “in private,” though
  - Meet in your office, if you have one, with the door closed
  - If you have a cubicle, meet at your desk, with sensitivity (it really does work)
  - If you are meeting remotely, ensure the VISTA member has a private space

## Tips

- Focus primarily on the VISTA member
- **Reference the VISTA assignment description (VAD)**
- Schedule the meetings regularly—and avoid missing them

## What questions should I ask myself?

- **According to the VAD, what is it due to check on?** What is the key objective for this work period (e.g., month or quarter)? What activities/tasks is the VISTA member focused on?
- **What positive feedback can I give?**
- **What adjusting feedback am I going to give?**

## What questions could I ask each VISTA member?

- Tell me about your week—what’s it been like?
- What activities/tasks are going well?
- What activities/tasks have you stumbled over?
- What questions do you have about this activity/task?
- Are you on track to meet the deadline?
- What worries you?
- What suggestions do you have?
- Where do you think I can be most helpful?

Modified from [www.manager-tools.com/docs/Manager-Tools\\_One\\_on\\_One\\_Basics](http://www.manager-tools.com/docs/Manager-Tools_One_on_One_Basics)

# One-on-one Meetings with VISTA members, cont.

*VISTA member*

*Date*

**Personal check-in (e.g., housing, pets, hobbies, friends, etc.)**

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**VISTA member update (notes you take during his or her 10 minutes)**

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**Supervisor update (notes you take to prepare for your 10 minutes)**

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**Next steps (e.g., next meeting date and time)**

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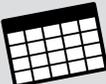
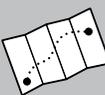
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# VISTA Blended Learning & Development Program

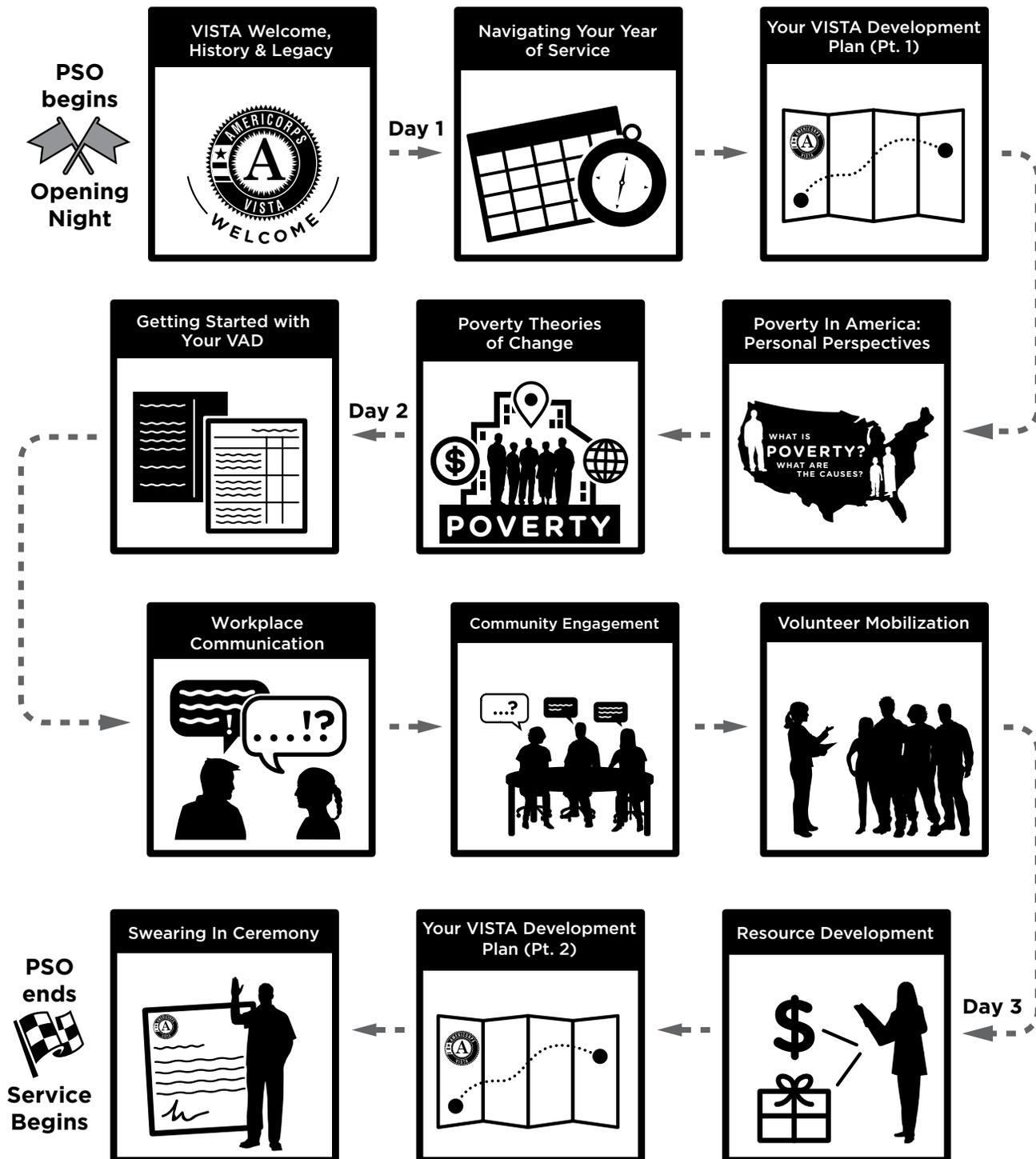
A continuum of training, resources, and peer connections to ensure VISTA members build capacity, alleviate poverty, and thrive throughout their service experience.

	 <b>In-Person Training &amp; Support</b>	 <b>VISTA Campus</b> <a href="http://www.vistacampus.gov">www.vistacampus.gov</a>
<b>PRE-SERVICE</b>	 <b>Pre-Service Orientation</b>	 <b>Pre-Service Online Tutorials</b>
<b>IN-SERVICE</b>	 <b>On-Site Orientation &amp; Training</b>	 <b>Online Courses</b> <i>Resource Development</i> <i>Volunteer Mobilization</i>
		 <b>In-Service Resources &amp; Tutorials</b>
	 <b>Classes, Workshops &amp; Conferences<sup>1</sup></b> <i>Supported by Sponsor</i>	 <b>Webinars</b>
		 <b>Forums</b>
<b>CLOSE OF SERVICE</b>	 <b>Life After Service Events<sup>2</sup></b>	 <b>Transition Resources</b>

1. While the On-Site Orientation & Training is required, any additional classes, workshops or conferences offered during service depends on the sponsors' capacity to make them available.

2. Life After Service events are offered by State Offices, sponsors and other entities depending on their capacities to make them available.

# Pre-Service Orientation



# Virtual Member Orientation

The VISTA program offers candidate's orientation to address terms, conditions, and benefits of service and key programming principles to VISTA members at the start of their service in two formats: a face-to-face Pre-Service Orientation (PSO) and an online Virtual Member Orientation (VMO). VMO combines a variety of learning modalities — the online capabilities of the VISTA Campus and live webinars, face-to-face training in On-Site Orientation and Training, and self-directed action learning in the community and at project site. VMO gives the VISTA program flexibility in meeting recruitment targets, and removes challenges for VISTAs related to travel and time away from home.

## The Virtual Member Orientation:

- Dovetails with the OSOT and includes a mix of self-directed online learning along with fieldwork onsite.
- Is most effective when integrated with OSOT and supported by an engaged supervisor.
- Takes place at the VISTA project site and in the community.
- Does not require travel.
- Begins on the first day of service at the site.
- Requires that members have a workstation with a phone, computer, and internet access by the first day of service.
- Requires that members attend an onboarding webinar before arriving at site and an induction webinar on their first day of service.

VISTA sponsors can check with their state office to learn which orientation their VISTAs will attend and the associated enrollment deadlines.

The *Guide to Entering VISTA Service* is sent to all VISTA candidates who are enrolled in the Virtual Member Orientation. The Guide provides details about VMO and outlines the onboarding steps a VISTA candidate needs to complete prior to arriving at their service site. It also includes a calendar that lists webinar dates and important deadlines.

To succeed in Virtual Member Orientation, members need to have the following:

- Access to a computer with reliable internet connection (cell phone or tablet is not adequate)
- Access to telephone or a headset/microphone for the computer
- English language proficiency
- Basic computer skills

To learn more about the Virtual Member Orientation:

- Access the "Virtual Member Orientation" page on the VISTA Campus at: [www.vistacampus.gov/VMO](http://www.vistacampus.gov/VMO)

# VMO at-a-glance

Pre-Service	 <b>Onboarding Forms</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Direct Deposit</li> <li>▪ Federal Tax Withholding (W4)</li> <li>▪ Unpaid Compensation</li> <li>▪ End of Service Benefit Selection</li> </ul>
	 <b>VISTA Campus Coursework</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Terms and Conditions</li> <li>▪ Civil Rights and Responsibilities</li> <li>▪ Benefits of Service</li> <li>▪ Mission and Legacy of VISTA</li> <li>▪ VISTA Campus Overview</li> <li>▪ Test Your Knowledge</li> </ul>
	 <b>Onboarding Webinar – <i>Countdown to VISTA Service</i></b>
Day One	 <b>Induction Webinar – <i>Launching Your VISTA Service</i></b>
In-Service	 <b>VISTA Campus Coursework</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ On-site Orientation and Training</li> <li>▪ Poverty Theory of Change</li> <li>▪ Minute Intro</li> <li>▪ How Poverty is Measured in the United States</li> <li>▪ VISTA Assignment Description Worksheet</li> <li>▪ Community Profile</li> <li>▪ Thirteen Lessons About Poverty</li> </ul>
	 <b>Criminal History Background Check</b>

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# A Successful OSOT is

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## **Well paced**

- Begins on the first day of service and is provided in digestible chunks allowing member time in between to absorb what they are learning and explore concepts on their own.

## **Thorough**

- Includes appropriate topics that any new employee would need in addition to VISTA-specific topics.

## **Social**

- Introduces member to employees, the community and other VISTAs in a personal way

## **Builds on prior experience**

- Encourages member to recall ideas or problem solving strategies they have used in the past to be successful, enter a new community, organize their work, etc.

## **Personalized**

- A member's OSOT should be informed by their strengths and areas for development.

## **Intentional**

- Includes an agenda and/or plan for the first day, first week, first month and ongoing training

## **Organized**

- Key documents, policies and procedures, contact lists, etc are accessible/provided.

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# Orientation Stations Activity Instructions

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**Directions for all stations:**

1. Read the brief introduction to your station activity.
  2. Follow the steps outlined in the individual station activities below and access the workbook for related worksheets
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## 1. Single Sites & Sub-sites: Planning and Refining your OSOT

It's important to plan both the topics you'll cover in OSOT and how best to cover them. Think of orientation as a process and map out the sequence of activities over a few days or weeks, if you can.

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1. Throughout this orientation you've been capturing ideas/activities in your notes. You now have a chance to mull it over and begin formulating an actual plan for your OSOT. Or if you have already delivered an OSOT, this is time for you to reflect on how you can refine or improve it for your next delivery.
  2. In your group choose 2 to 3 people to work with.
  3. Log on to VISTA Campus at: [www.vistacampus.gov](http://www.vistacampus.gov) and go to the "Orienting your VISTA" section and take a look at the following materials. Download and save any relevant resources to your computer. (Direct URLs are also provided, in case you need them.):
    - OSOT Checklist  
[www.vistacampus.gov/resources/osot-checklist](http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/osot-checklist)  
Or refer to later pages of this workbook.
    - On-Site Orientation and Training Guidebook  
[www.vistacampus.gov/resources/site-orientation-and-training-guidebook](http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/site-orientation-and-training-guidebook)
    - OSOT Guidelines  
[www.vistacampus.gov/resources/osot-guidelines](http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/osot-guidelines)
  4. Discuss the materials with your group. What can you take from them? Thinking about the qualities of a successful OSOT, what would you change in your current OSOT?
  5. Use the "Planning your Orientation" worksheet in your workbook, to construct or refine your OSOT.
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# Orientation Stations Activity

## Instructions, cont.

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### 2. Intermediaries: Planning a Sub-Site Supervisor Orientation

Because some of your sub-site supervisors have not been to SO yet, they are relying on you to get them up-to-speed on all they need to know (and do) to be effective VISTA supervisors. Depending on the size and set up of your project, you may need to orient them virtually, and over time. Orienting your sub-sites is as crucial as orienting your members. The sub-site supervisors are closest to the VISTA members, providing the day-to-day direction and support as well as inspiration.

1. Throughout this orientation you've been capturing ideas/activities in your notes. You now have a chance to mull it over and begin formulating an actual plan for your orienting your sub-site supervisors in each area.
  2. In your group choose 2 to 3 people to work with.
  3. Discuss with your small group the following:
    - Who are your sub-site supervisors? Do they have a history with national service? What do they know about VISTA? What specific training and support will they need?
    - Are there any items you listed in your notes that you want to discuss with the group?
    - What came up in the *Who Are the VISTAs* session that you want to cover with your sub-site supervisors?
    - How will you train your team? Do you plan to do it in person? Or will you do it via webinar and conference calls? What tools do you need to put into place to train your team?
    - Will you do the training alone or do you have others to work with? If you are not someone with a lot of training experience, how can you get the support you need to train your team?
    - How will you communicate with your sub-sites on a regular basis?
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# Orientation Stations Activity

## Instructions, cont.

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4. Log on to VISTA Campus at: [www.vistacampus.gov](http://www.vistacampus.gov) and go to the “Working with Sub-Sites” section and take a look at the following materials. Download and save to your computer any of the resources that seem relevant. (Direct URLs are also provided, in case you need them.):
    - Training Sub-Site Supervisors Syllabus  
[www.vistacampus.gov/resources/training-sub-site-supervisors-syllabus](http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/training-sub-site-supervisors-syllabus)
    - VISTA Sponsor and Sub-Site Supervisor Major Tasks At-a-Glance  
[www.vistacampus.gov/resources/vista-sponsor-and-sub-site-supervisor-major-tasks-glance](http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/vista-sponsor-and-sub-site-supervisor-major-tasks-glance)
  5. Use the “Planning your Orientation” worksheet in your workbook to plan and refine your Sub-Site Supervisor Orientation.
-



# OSOT Checklist

## Welcome to the community organization: Getting started

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Introduce member to the head of the organization (president/CEO/director). The head then briefly discusses the history and purpose of the organization, the project, and how the member fits in. | <input type="checkbox"/> Explain organization rules about absenteeism, tardiness, process for reporting absence or illness.     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Introduce member to co-workers during tour of facility.  | <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss timesheets, leave usage.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Show member his or her work area.  | <input type="checkbox"/> Explain the VISTA compensation process.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Show location of rest rooms, lunch, and break rooms/ space.  | <input type="checkbox"/> Explain break policy and lunch hour (tell about restaurants in area).                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Member attends regular staff meeting. Take time at staff meeting to remind everyone what the member's role will be. Help the member feel welcome and part of the team.                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Explain use of telephone, mail services, copier (security code), computer network, etc.                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss basic terms of work, policies, procedures.   | <input type="checkbox"/> Explain standards of conduct, including rules of dress, personal grooming, smoking, housekeeping, etc. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Explain hours of work and overtime policies, holidays and leave days.  | <input type="checkbox"/> Explain parking practices and provide (or arrange for) building, office keys.                          |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Explain safety procedures.   |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Explain how to order supplies.   |

## Tips for the first day

- Lunch with the member to make him or her feel at home.
- If the member has moved from another part of the country, ask how the transition is going and if you might help. Discuss housing situation, local shopping and services, banks, medical facilities, etc. If there is time at the end of the day, give member time to take care of some of these needs - everything related to housing, bank account, phone service, post office, etc.

# OSOT Checklist, cont.

## Organizational purpose and mission and the VISTA project

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss in more detail the mission, background, and purpose of the sponsoring organization. | <input type="checkbox"/> Explain departmental and divisional functions, goals, teams and team structure, major projects. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Explain history and purpose of the organization.  | <input type="checkbox"/> Explain the purpose of the VISTA project and role of the members.                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Review organization mission, goals, and objectives.   | <input type="checkbox"/> Explain project goals and objectives.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Review organization structure.  | <input type="checkbox"/> Review past work of project if in year 2 or 3.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Provide copy of organizational chart and review staff duties.                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Give the member time to read any materials given to him/her.                                    |

## Member assignment, supervisory relationship, and community investigation

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clarify individual member assignment(s), how goals will be achieved, and how the member's progress in achieving project objectives will be assessed.                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Explain supervisory and support structure, communications, reporting, accountability.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Review the VISTA Assignment Description, explain specific responsibilities.  | <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss the working relationship between the member and direct supervisor, mutual expectations, communications style, work style, support needs, etc. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Important: Make it clear what the expected project outcomes are, what the member will help create and how it will help individuals or communities move out of poverty. | <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss and clarify communication procedures and practices.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Explain performance reviews (date for first review, frequency thereafter).   | <input type="checkbox"/> Review staff meeting and team meeting schedules.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Provide a copy of performance standards.   | <input type="checkbox"/> Explain steps in discipline procedure (verbal warning, written warning, etc.) and specify actions that result in disciplinary action.                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss performance expectations and standards and reporting requirements.   | <input type="checkbox"/> End on a positive, affirming note about how excited you are to have the member working on this project.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss specific performance objectives that will be reviewed during the initial period.   | <input type="checkbox"/> Have the member interview other staff about work styles, communications, etc.   |

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# OSOT Checklist, cont.

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## Tips for the first week

- Give the member time to take care of any additional basic needs related to, for example, housing, bank account, phone service, post office, etc. If a staff member is available to help, have her or him accompany the new member.
- Plan a lunch with a group of office colleagues.
- Plan a team building activity with staff, other members, project collaborators, other AmeriCorps members, etc.
- Plan a potluck dinner with office staff, other members, AmeriCorps and Senior Corps members, and VISTA alumni.
- Save time for check-ins to answer questions about the organization or project.
- Set up an Independent Community Investigation Activity where the member spends a half-day exploring the community and making a mental inventory of assets, needs, and cultural practices.

## Community Investigation Activity Directions:

1. Schedule time with an expert on the community that the member will meet with after his observation.
2. Brief the member before he or she heads out into the community about where to go, what to look for, and how to ensure safety.
3. The member meets with the expert on the community discuss observations from the previous day.
4. This community “expert” provides a background on the community during a more guided tour than the member’s previous day’s meanderings.
5. The expert explains the nature of the low-income population served by the project.
6. The expert introduces the member to community leaders, especially those involved in the VISTA project.
7. The expert discusses cultural norms, do’s and don’ts, social outlets to enjoy and those to stay away from, etc.
8. Have the member spend the afternoon with one or more partner organizations or other members and AmeriCorps state and national members involved in this or related projects.
9. Supervisor discusses impressions and findings from the Independent Community Investigation Activity with the member including the implications these have for the project and the member’s assignment.

# OSOT Checklist, cont.

## Skill development

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> The member accompanies staff member for the whole day out of the office - conducting community interviews, recruiting volunteer participation in project, managing volunteers on project, etc.  | <input type="checkbox"/> Informational/collaboration interviews with representatives from a variety of community agencies.                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The member accompanies staff member of another organization involved in similar or complementary efforts for the whole day, conducting community interviews, recruiting volunteer participation in project, managing volunteers on project etc. | <input type="checkbox"/> Member drafts a one-month, member assignment, with clear and detailed activities and reviews it with the supervisor. |

## Tips for the first month

- Have member spend time with a tech tutor or on their own learning or refining computer skills he will need (e.g., Microsoft Word, Excel, Publisher, Access) for producing flyers, pamphlets and posters; writing grant proposals; building or using contact databases; etc.
- Empower the member to begin independent implementation of project with frequent check-in sessions with supervisor and other key organization staff to see how the work is going. Supervisor makes it clear to the member that this third week is still a period of learning, practice, testing, and adapting. He should not worry about making mistakes, asking lots of questions, and experimenting.
- Set up additional skill training for the member as needed: For example, the member could participate in a public speaking class offered by the community continuing education program; learn from an experienced staff member the key components of a quality grant proposal; take an online tutorial about volunteer recruitment on the VISTA Campus ([www.vistacampus.gov](http://www.vistacampus.gov)), or spend an afternoon with someone from the credit union to learn about the management of low-income loan programs, interest rates, and starting a small business.

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# VISTA Campus Scavenger Hunt

## Answer Key

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### Member Support

1. A VISTA asks you for more details on the VISTA child care benefits. What page on the Campus would you direct her to?
  - Benefits of Service: [www.vistacampus.gov/in-service/benefits-service](http://www.vistacampus.gov/in-service/benefits-service)
2. You oversee a multi-state project and discover that some of your VISTAs in rural areas feel lonely and would like to find other VISTAs in their communities. What tool can they use on the Campus to find other VISTAs and alumni?
  - The VISTA Map: [www.vistacampus.gov/map](http://www.vistacampus.gov/map)
3. Your members are in their last quarter of service and need to begin thinking about what they will do next. You would like to find some end-of-service talking points to use during your member check-ins. Where do you find them?
  - Transitions Talking Points: [www.vistacampus.gov/resources/transitions-talking-points](http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/transitions-talking-points)
4. Your member has requested personal leave and you need to review the policy on leave. Where do you find the details about leave?
  - Member Handbook – Chapter 9 Leave Benefits: [www.vistacampus.gov/chapter-9-leave-benefits](http://www.vistacampus.gov/chapter-9-leave-benefits)
5. One of your members would like to accept a weekend position at the local coffee shop. You want to review the policy on outside employment before saying yes. Where do you find the policy information?
  - Life as a VISTA: Outside Employment Policy – [www.vistacampus.gov/resources/outside-employment-policy](http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/outside-employment-policy)

# VISTA Campus Scavenger Hunt Answer Key, cont.

## Working with sub-sites

1. A sub-site supervisor asks for guidance on how to write a VAD. What resource on the Campus would you direct him to?
  - The VISTA Assignment: [www.vistacampus.gov/supervisors/vista-assignment](http://www.vistacampus.gov/supervisors/vista-assignment)
  - Creating Effective VADs: [www.vistacampus.gov/resources/creating-effective-vads](http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/creating-effective-vads)
2. You need to develop a training for your sub-site supervisors. Where can you find support materials to do so on the Campus?
  - Working with Sub-sites: [www.vistacampus.gov/supervisors/working-sub-sites](http://www.vistacampus.gov/supervisors/working-sub-sites)
3. You want to provide a webinar on coaching and supervision for your sub-site supervisors. What resource could you adapt for your webinar?
  - Successful Member Coaching and Supervision for Sub-site Supervisors: [www.vistacampus.gov/resources/successful-member-coaching-and-supervision-sub-site-supervisors](http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/successful-member-coaching-and-supervision-sub-site-supervisors)
4. What resource outlines the roles, responsibilities and expectations for VISTA supervisors?
  - The Supervisor Manual: [www.vistacampus.gov/lessons/vista-supervisors-manual](http://www.vistacampus.gov/lessons/vista-supervisors-manual)

## Training Resources for you, your team, your organization

1. You would like to show the VISTA Legacy video to your Executive Director and colleagues, so they can know more about the VISTA program. Where do you find the video on the Campus?
  - Under “About VISTA” then under “History and Mission”: [www.vistacampus.gov/about/vista-history-and-mission](http://www.vistacampus.gov/about/vista-history-and-mission)
2. You want to point your members and sub-sites to synchronous e-learning opportunities. What is available on the Campus?
  - For members, webinars and online courses
  - For sub-sites, webinars
  - Find all opportunities under the “Connect & Learn” tab

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# VISTA Campus Scavenger Hunt

## Answer Key, cont.

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3. You need to get up to speed on eGrants, where do you find support?
  - My AmeriCorps and eGrants Support for VISTA Programs: [www.vistacampus.gov/resources/my-ameri-corps-and-egrants-support-vista-programs](http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/my-ameri-corps-and-egrants-support-vista-programs)
4. You heard about the VISTA Leaders Action Learning Challenge resources and want to explore what is available. Where do you find products created by leaders?
  - Life as a VISTA, VISTA Leaders, Action Learning, Action Learning Teams Products: [www.vistacampus.gov/resources/action-learning-team-products](http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/action-learning-team-products)
5. You are curious how other supervisors have structured their OSOT. What tool can you use to reach out to other supervisors to find out?
  - Connect & Learn, Forums, Supervisor Cafe: [www.vistacampus.gov/forums/supervisor-cafe-0](http://www.vistacampus.gov/forums/supervisor-cafe-0)

# Managing Your VISTA Project

## The Big Picture

### CNCS State Office

Helps develop, manage, and monitor VISTA projects

Support your supervision of VISTA members and intervene in emergencies or difficult situations

Staff are responsible for connecting you to resources

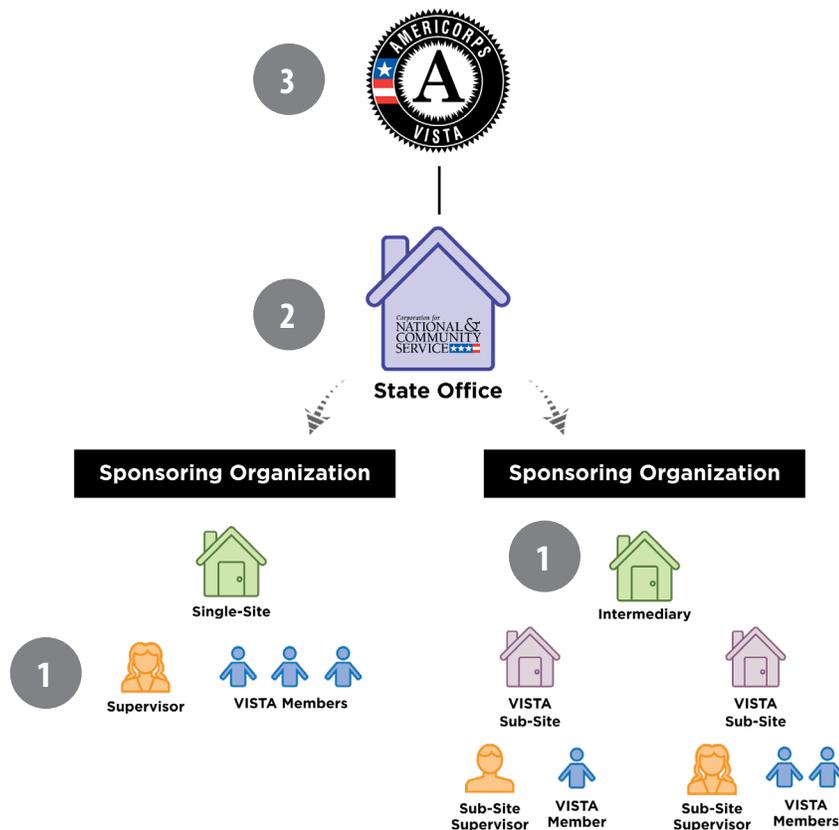
Technical assistance via conference calls, webinars, etc. regarding:

- *eGrants*
- *Recruitment*
- *Training and program registration*
- *Reporting*
- *Adjusting project plans, VADs, and on-site orientation and training plans (OSOT)*
- *Compliance monitoring of the project*

### Reporting Relationships

Communication chain:

1. VISTA member goes to immediate supervisor first (intermediary if applicable)
2. CNCS State Office if program-related
3. VISTA Headquarters if not resolved



# Managing Your VISTA Project, cont.

## The Big Picture, cont.

### Supervisor Training & Resources

Onboarding materials on the VISTA Campus

3-day Supervisor Orientation

Webinars and Micro Learning opportunities for supervisors:  
[www.vistacampus.gov/supervisor-webinars](http://www.vistacampus.gov/supervisor-webinars)

Use the VISTA Campus for ongoing support: tutorials, tools, recorded webinars, forums, etc.

Supervisor Manual: [www.vistacampus.gov/lessons/vista-supervisors-manual](http://www.vistacampus.gov/lessons/vista-supervisors-manual)

## Roles and Responsibilities

### Project Management Responsibilities

Monitor progress and collect data in relation to your performance measures

Report to CNCS

Ensure VISTA members know our expectations, including the amount of living allowances

### Member Management Responsibilities

VAD development

Orientation and Training (OSOT)

Administrative support (space, supplies, equipment)

Supervision (guidance, support, coaching)

### Other Monitoring Responsibilities

Monitor attendance, use of leave days, and teleservice

Reimburse service-related transportation (not commuting)

Submit Sponsor Verification Form

Emergency Funds Advance, if required

### Fingerprinting Responsibilities

CNCS State Office sends fingerprinting packet and instructions to supervisor

Supervisor sends it to VISTA member

VISTA member responsible for getting fingerprinted

\$25 fingerprinting subsidy

Recommend getting fingerprinted in first week

Submit fingerprints to VISTA HQ

Deadline: 30 days from service start date

### Sponsoring Agency Responsibilities

Recognize members as VISTA members:

- *On your website, blogs, and social media*
- *In print and broadcast publicity*
- *On member business cards*
- *At public meetings and conferences*

Resources:

- *CNCS logos: [www.nationalservice.gov/logos](http://www.nationalservice.gov/logos)*
- *Outreach Hub*

### VISTA Relocation Responsibilities

VISTA candidates attending PSO Classic:

- *May be approved to relocate prior to, through, or after PSO*
- *Must relocate to their service site prior to starting service.*

VISTA candidates attending Virtual Member Orientation (VMO):

- *Must relocate to their service site prior to attending VMO & prior to starting service*

Know your VISTA candidate's relocation plans

# Managing Your VISTA Project, cont.

## Roles and Responsibilities, cont.

### Housing Responsibilities

Advise VISTA members on safe areas to live

Ask Board, staff, community for housing leads

Additional support you can provide

- Offer temporary housing if possible during the search
- Pay all or part of the rent directly to landlord

Allow them time for the search and settling in

### OSOT Responsibilities

Submit OSOT plan well before VISTA member's arrival

Implement when the VISTA member arrives at service site

- *The more support and more comprehensive the OSOT, the shorter the learning curve*

## Terms, Conditions & Benefits

### Conditions of Service

Prohibited actions and policies:

- *Can VISTA members work part time in their free time?*  
Yes / No
- *Can VISTA members serve if they have a criminal history?*  
Yes / No
- *Can VISTA members join their colleagues in prayer at their service site?*  
Yes / No
- *Can VISTA members register voters as part of their VISTA assignment?*  
Yes / No

### VMSU and Benefits

VISTA Member Support Unit (VMSU):

- *Contact through the National Service Hotline (800-942-2677)*
- *Manages VISTA service benefits.*

A sponsor may contact the VMSU in support of a VISTA member, though it should be unnecessary.

Project issues should be referred to your CNCS State Office.

### VMSU Support Areas

End of Service Benefits

- *Education award*
- *Cash stipend*
- *Interest accrual payment*
- *Forbearance requests*

Travel

- *Reimbursements*
- *Emergency*

Service Letters

- *Verification of service*
- *Income disregard*

Benefits

- *Child care*
- *Health benefits*

Forms

- *W-4*
- *Direct deposit*

# Managing Your VISTA Project, cont.

## Terms, Conditions & Benefits, cont.

### Living Allowance

“Standard” VISTA members:

- *Paid directly by VISTA headquarters*
- *Paid via direct deposit*
- *Direct deposit and all related forms are available via [my.americorps.gov](http://my.americorps.gov)*

“Program Grant” VISTA members:

- *“Payroll” is managed by the grantee, including tax reporting (W-2 and 1099)*

Income disregard

### The Affordable Care Act (ACA) and VISTA

VISTA candidates are expected to have health coverage:

- *Family – through parents, a spouse, or partner*
- *Insurance through the Marketplace*
- *Medicaid, Medicare, Tricare*

Some VISTA candidates may be exempt from ACA requirement

60-day special enrollment period

VISTA provides limited health benefits

### Healthcare Allowance

For VISTA members who maintain insurance throughout their service year

Healthcare allowance: up to \$7,350

Can be used towards:

- *Annual deductible or coinsurance costs*
- *Copayments for office visits*
- *Prescriptions*

### Health Benefit Plan

For VISTA members who are exempt from ACA requirement

Limited health care plan:

- *Designed to reduce out-of-pocket costs*
- *Free for VISTA members*
- *Individual coverage (dependents are not covered)*
- *Not full major medical coverage*
- *Prescription benefit (\$0-5 copay)*
- *Does NOT cover pre-existing conditions*
- *Limited dental and vision*
- *Telehealth care benefit*

### Electing a Health Benefit

When VISTA members start service, they need to enroll in a benefit plan on the International Medical Group (IMG) website, [americorpsvista.imglobal.com](http://americorpsvista.imglobal.com)

More details at [www.vistacampus.gov](http://www.vistacampus.gov)

### Helping Your VISTA Member

What can you do as a VISTA sponsor to support your VISTA member?

- *Housing*
- *Orientation to community, safety, and security*
- *Health insurance*
- *Ongoing training*
- *Clothing/promotional items (agency logo apparel), [www.nationalservice.gov/logos](http://www.nationalservice.gov/logos)*
- *Food/gifts*

Be fair and equitable in support to all VISTA members serving with you

# Managing Your VISTA Project, cont.

## Terms, Conditions & Benefits, cont.

### VISTA Leaders

VISTA leaders served at least one year of national service (not just VISTA), and help:

- *Recruit*
- *Train*
- *Support teams of at least eight (8) VISTA members*
- *Mentor*
- *Coordinate report writing*

They can guide in data collection and interpret data (but not perform the reporting).

## Reporting

### Sponsor Verification

Biweekly email notification

Completed in eGrants

See "AmeriCorps VISTA Supervisors Manual" on the VISTA Campus for detailed instructions

Must be completed on-time

### Project Progress Report (PPR)

The PPR is located & submitted in eGrants

Reflects accomplishment (milestones) of overall project

- *Not the VISTA member's tasks in their VADs*

Contains:

- *Supervisor's narratives*
- *Member(s)' narrative(s)*

Additionally, a sampling of the following can be sent via e-mail or hard copy to the CNCS State Office:

- *Press coverage*
- *Newsletters*
- *Curriculum*
- *Other*

Links, attachments, and images are not supported in eGrants

### Project Reporting Periods

First year projects report quarterly

Second and third year projects may report semi-annually, at the discretion of the CNCS State Office

Confirm your reporting periods and due dates with your CNCS State Office

### VISTA Progress Report Supplement (VPRS)

The VPRS is located and submitted in eGrants.

It is an annual supplement to the PPR.

The data are aggregated and reported externally – the VPRS is not used to assess project progress performance.

The VPRS asks for performance information that CNCS tracks from all CNCS programs.

VPRS reports on CNCS performance measures in capacity building activities.

- *Capacity building is defined as a set of activities that expand the scale, reach, efficiency, or effectiveness of programs and organizations.*

# Managing Your VISTA Project, cont.

## Reporting, cont.

### VPRS Measures in Brief

- # community volunteers recruited and/or managed

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- # organizations implementing 3 or more effective volunteer management practices

---

- # staff and community volunteers received training

---

- # organizations completed community assessment

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- # hours of service contributed by community volunteers

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- # organizations more effective, additional activities, new systems or processes

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- Dollar value of cash/in-kind resource leveraged

### VPRS Reporting

- Annual report due October 31st for the previous fiscal year (October 1 – September 30)

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- Confer with your CNCS State Office to determine what data you will collect and report

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- Establish tracking tools to collect the data

### Informal Communications

- Communicate with your CNCS State Office via:
  - *Email (snippets of accomplishments, member activities are helpful)*
  - *Individual state page on VISTA Campus*
  - *Phone*

### Monitoring and Compliance Visits

- Site visits
  - *Conducted by CNCS State Office staff (occasionally headquarters)*
  - *May be informational, to provide technical assistance, or for monitoring*

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- Compliance monitoring visits
  - *Scheduled in advance*
  - *Interviews with project staff, VISTA members, advisory council members, and community*
  - *Review of documentation and procedures*
  - *A letter outlining conclusions is shared after*

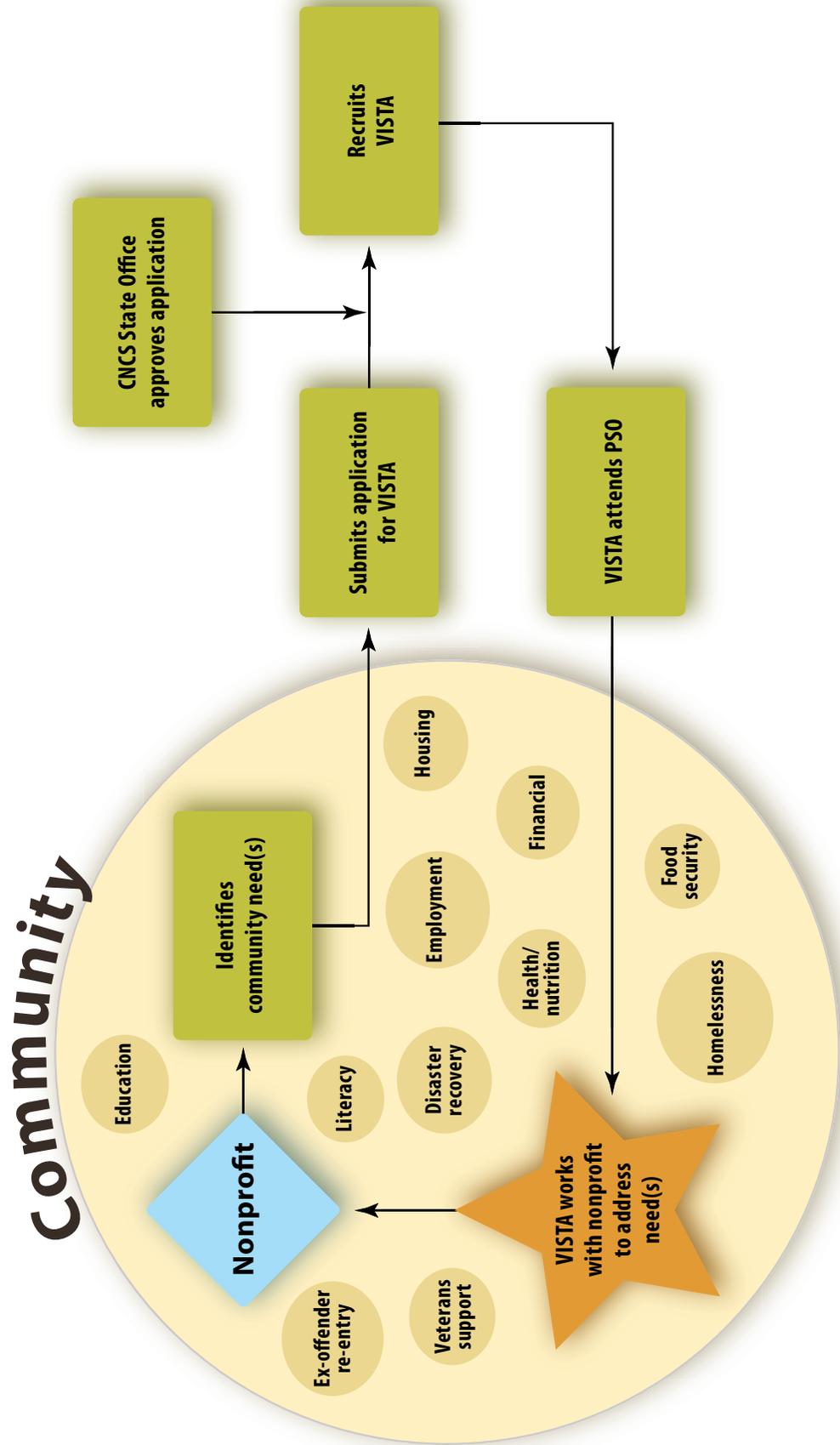
### Regulatory Compliance

- Red flags:
  - *Replacing staff or serving as administrative assistant*
  - *Assignments unrelated to the VAD*
  - *Direct service*

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- CNCS Office of Inspector General
  - *800-452-8210*
  - *hotline@cncsoig.gov*
  - *www.cncsoig.gov*

# How a Sponsor Gets a VISTA



# Summary of Key Terms, Conditions & Benefits of VISTA Service

VISTAs must be **at least 18 years old**; be **U.S. citizens, nationals, or legal residents**; and successfully complete a **criminal background check**, which entails a search of the National Sex Offenders Registry and an FBI criminal history check.

VISTA is a 12-month, **full-time commitment**. VISTAs are required to serve full time as defined at their sponsoring organization, but may serve in excess of that amount focusing on capacity-building activities. They usually serve during the work hours of their sponsoring organizations but are expected to be available evenings and weekends to meet the needs of the project and community. A person may **serve up to five terms of AmeriCorps VISTA service**.

VISTAs receive a **living allowance** (directly deposited every two weeks), **health coverage**, and **10 personal and 10 sick days**. Additionally, all VISTAs receive **training and development opportunities**, including a Pre-Service Orientation provided by the Corporation for National & Community Service and an on-site orientation provided by their sponsoring organization.

Based on the circumstances and/or wishes of the individual, a VISTA may receive some additional benefits, including a **settling-in allowance** of \$550 for moving expenses and a **child care allotment** based on household income and state of residence. VISTAs are covered by **workers' compensation** for service-related injuries. Some VISTAs will also benefit from **income exclusion** to continue public assistance they were receiving before joining VISTA. Finally, some VISTAs may be eligible for **tax benefits** such as the earned income tax credit.

VISTAs can choose to receive either the **education award (\$5,920)** or a **cash stipend (\$1,800)** at the end of their VISTA service. VISTAs cannot switch from the stipend to the education award, but they can switch from the education award to the stipend before the end of their 10th month of service.

If a VISTA selects the **education award**, eligible student loans can be put into **forbearance**, and the National Service Trust will pay the interest that accrued during the service year after the completion of service. The VISTA is responsible for the accrued interest and must submit the **Interest Accrual Form** to the National Service Trust to have the interest paid.

A percentage of Perkins Loan debt can be forgiven if the **cash stipend** is selected. **Deferment** may be granted by the lender based on economic hardship. Accrued interest is the responsibility of the VISTA.

When VISTAs satisfactorily complete one full year of service, they earn one year of **non-competitive eligibility (NCE)** status. NCE allows a federal agency to hire AmeriCorps VISTA alumni who meet the minimum qualifications for a federal job without going through all the formalities of the competitive process.

VISTAs are allowed to have **part-time outside employment**. However, under no circumstances may VISTA members be an employee of or contractor for the sponsor or project to which they are assigned to serve. Outside employment **must not conflict with project** service or service hours—nor conflict with any applicable law or VISTA program requirements or policies. A VISTA must submit the Outside Employment Request Form, and the supervisor must agree that the outside work will not interfere with VISTA service. If work does interfere, the VISTA may be asked to either end employment or end VISTA service. For more information, visit [www.vistacampus.gov/employment](http://www.vistacampus.gov/employment).

VISTAs **are allowed to attend class(es)**. However, their studies **must not interfere with VISTA responsibilities**. VISTAs must discuss taking class(es) with their supervisor before enrolling. The supervisor needs to agree that studies will not interfere with the VISTA project. If classes do interfere, the VISTA may be asked to either withdraw from the course within one week or end VISTA service.

**Any political advocacy, organizing, promotion, or demonstration while on VISTA duty—or while PERCEIVED to be on duty—is prohibited.** This includes registering people to vote or driving people to voting polls, engaging in any pro- or anti-labor organizing activities, lobbying, or taking any action with respect to a partisan or nonpartisan political activity that would result in the identification of the VISTA program with the activity.

VISTA members may **not conduct religious instruction** or engage in proselytizing or other religious activities **as part of their duties**.

# Hatch Act Limitations on VISTA Political Activities

## Prohibitions on Political & Lobbying Activities

Updated 6/28/05. Chapter 14: Basic Laws and Federal Regulations in your Member Handbook

No appropriated funds of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) shall be used to finance, directly or indirectly, any activity designed to influence the outcome of an election to federal, state, or local office or a voter registration activity, or pay the salary of a CNCS employee who engages in such activity.

In addition, VISTA programs are prohibited from using funds or personnel in a matter supporting or resulting in the identification of such programs with partisan or nonpartisan election activities, in voter registration activities, and in providing transportation to the polls. Additionally, no VISTA member or employee of a sponsoring organization may take any action with respect to a partisan or nonpartisan political activity that would result in the identification or apparent identification of the AmeriCorps VISTA program with such activity (see 42 U.S.C. § 5043 for additional restrictions and prohibitions).

VISTA programs also are prohibited from any activity intended to influence the passage or defeat of legislation or proposals by initiative petition (see 42 U.S.C. § 5043 (c) for additional restrictions and prohibitions).

You may participate in political activities allowed under the Hatch Act. The Domestic Volunteer Service Act at 42 U.S.C. § 5055 applies the restrictions of the Hatch Act, Title V, United States Code, Chapter 73, to VISTA members. The Hatch Act applies to you at all times during your service, including off duty hours. Permissible activities under the Hatch Act apply to VISTA members unless these activities are prohibited by other statutory authority when the members are on authorized leave or are not perceived to be performing as a VISTA member (e.g., while not engaged in performing service, or on service time).

You have the right to register and vote as you choose, express opinions about candidates and issues in a nonpublic context, contribute money to political organizations, and attend political meetings. You also may join and be a member of a political party or club, and sign nominating petitions if you do not identify these activities with VISTA or your sponsoring organization.

CNCS regulations that prohibit electoral and lobbying activities are contained in 45 CFR Part 1226 (see Appendix C). The approach of the regulations is twofold: 1) Restrictions on the assignment of VISTA members to, or restrictions on the receipt of CNCS funds by, certain organizations because of the nature of the organizations or their activities; and 2) Restrictions on member assignments and activities.

The organizational restrictions are based on the premise that the assignment of members or the receipt of CNCS funds by certain organizations (regardless of the proposed assignment or activity of the member) is precluded because of the organization's stated purpose or the nature of its activities.

The restrictions on member assignments and activities contain four basic areas of prohibited activities:

1) Electoral; 2) Voter registration, except that programs assisted under this Act may make voter registration information available to the public on the premises of such programs; 3) Voter transportation to the polls; and 4) Efforts of influence legislation. The prohibitions are directed to the use of CNCS funds, the assignments of members, and any other activities supported by CNCS funds.

The Domestic Volunteer Service Act provides two exceptions to the prohibitions on efforts to influence legislation: 1) At the request of a legislative body, committee, or member of a legislative body, and 2) Regarding an authorization or appropriation measure directly affecting the operation of the project or program.

The regulation, found at 45 CFR Part 1226, describes the conditions under which activities pursuant to these exceptions were once undertaken. The regulation also describes the applicability of the restrictions to sponsoring organization employees and the obligations of sponsoring organizations to ensure observance of the regulation. Appropriation laws have restricted these exceptions and activities permitted in 45 CFR Part 1226. Consequently, **you must contact your CNCS State Office before you engage in any political or lobbying activity.**

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# Policy on Civil Rights

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*Corporation for National & Community Service*

## Civil Rights Statement Regarding Volunteers, Service Participants & Other Beneficiaries

We continue to maintain the policy stated in our June 6, 1994, Civil Rights Statement:

*Recognizing that the fabric of our society is strengthened by the diversity of its citizens, the policy of the Corporation for National and Community Service is to ensure a mutual respect for all differences among us. Participation in the Corporation and its programs and projects will be based on merit and equal opportunity for all, without regard to factors such as race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, political affiliation, marital or parental status, military service, or religious, community, or social affiliations.*

By adhering to this policy, the Corporation will be able to foster civic responsibility, strengthen the ties that bind us together as a people, and provide educational opportunity for those who make a substantial commitment to service.

This policy applies to programs and projects we conduct, as well as those receiving federal financial assistance from us. For civil rights purposes, all programs and projects funded or receiving volunteers or service participants under the National and Community Service Act, as amended, or the Domestic Volunteer Service Act, as amended, are programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance. Any grantee found to have unlawfully discriminated against a volunteer, service participant, client, employee or beneficiary of such a program or project will be subject to a finding of noncompliance and administrative procedures which may result in termination of federal financial assistance from the Corporation and all other federal agencies.

Any volunteer, service participant, client, employee or beneficiary of a program or project who believes he or she has been subjected to discrimination in violation of nondiscrimination provisions of applicable laws, regulations or this policy may raise his or her concerns with the Corporation's Equal Opportunity Office. However, discrimination claims not brought to the attention of our Equal Opportunity Office within 45 days of their occurrence may not be accepted in a formal complaint of discrimination. Our Equal Opportunity Office may be reached at (202) 606-7503 (voice), (202) 606-3472 (TDD), [eo@cns.gov](mailto:eo@cns.gov), or through [www.nationalservice.org](http://www.nationalservice.org).

The Corporation's Equal Opportunity Office attempts to resolve concerns about discrimination promptly and, when possible, uses an informal conciliation process to do so. We encourage, but do not require, volunteers, service participants, and other beneficiaries to first bring concerns about discrimination to the director or appropriate personnel of the program or project. We likewise encourage directors of programs and projects to facilitate prompt resolution of these concerns.

Directors of all programs and projects are requested to provide a copy of this policy to all volunteers or service participants.

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# Policy on Equal Opportunity

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*Corporation for National & Community Service*

## **Equal Opportunity & Workforce Diversity Policy for Employees & Applicants for Employment**

It is our policy to provide equal employment opportunity for all applicants for employment and employees of the Corporation. We do not discriminate in any aspect of employment because of race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, mental or physical disability (including AIDS), sexual orientation, or any other improper criterion. We strive to provide a work environment free of sexual, racial, national origin, religious or other unlawful harassment.

Equal opportunity for all employees is an integral part of accomplishing the mission of the Corporation. As chief executive officer of the Corporation, I am strongly committed to fostering a workplace that is free of discrimination in any form. I believe that we should be committed to practicing inclusiveness, fairness, and participation of all employees in every facet of the Corporation.

Beyond the basic policies of equal employment and non-discrimination described above, we aspire to provide an environment that is hospitable for all employees. We value diversity among our employees, and I am committed to promoting a climate of mutual respect and appreciation for the strengths that a diverse workforce brings to bear on our important work.

In addition to making certain that our employees are treated with respect and according to the principles of equal opportunity in the workplace, we must make every effort to ensure that our employees, as they carry out their duties, do not discriminate on unlawful grounds against persons or organizations, volunteers or service participants, including subjecting them to any form of unlawful harassment.

I expect every Corporation manager, supervisor, and employee to actively carry out our equal opportunity policy. Implicit in each employee's "successful" performance level is his or her full and complete implementation of this policy. I call upon all managers and supervisors to ensure that all decisions affecting our workforce, service environments, grantees and programs are consistent with the principles of equal opportunity and this policy. Any person who violates this equal opportunity policy will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Any Corporation employee or applicant for employment who believes he or she has been discriminated against in violation of equal opportunity laws, regulations, or this policy, or in retaliation for having participated in an activity protected under these nondiscrimination provisions may raise his or her concerns with our Equal Opportunity Office. However, discrimination claims not brought to the attention of our Equal Opportunity Office within 45 days of their occurrence may not be accepted in a formal complaint of discrimination. Our Equal Opportunity Office may be reached at (202) 606-7503 (voice), (202) 606-3472 (TDD), or [eo@cns.gov](mailto:eo@cns.gov), or through our Web site at [www.nationalservice.org](http://www.nationalservice.org).

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# Policy on Harassment

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*Corporation for National & Community Service*

## **Policy Against Sexual, Racial, National Origin, or Religious Harassment**

Our policy is to provide work and service environments free from sexual, racial, national origin, or religious harassment. Whether in Corporation or grantee offices, in other work- or service-related settings such as service sites, training sessions, or site visits, or at work- or service-related social events, such harassment is unacceptable.

Sexual harassment involves unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or any verbal, physical or graphic conduct of a sexual nature when:

1. submission is explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment or service;
2. submission or rejection is a basis for work or service decisions; or
3. such conduct has the purpose or the effect of interfering with work or service performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or service environment.

Slurs and other verbal or physical conduct relating to an individual's race, national origin or religion also constitute harassment when that conduct's purpose or effect is to interfere with work or service performance or create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or service environment.

We expect Corporation and grantee supervisory and management personnel to immediately take appropriate action to prevent or stop any harassment of employees, service participants, or clients of which they become aware, whether the harassing conduct is by employees, service participants, or outside individuals such as service site or contractor personnel. Also, we will not retaliate or tolerate any attempt at retaliation against a person who raises harassment concerns in good faith. Any Corporation employee who violates our policy against harassment, or asserts a false claim of harassment with a malicious intent, will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Any grantee that permits harassment in violation of this policy will be subject to a finding of noncompliance and administrative procedures that may result in termination of federal financial assistance from the Corporation and all other federal agencies.

Persons who believe they have been subjected to harassment in violation of non-harassment provisions of applicable laws, regulations or this policy may raise their concerns with our Equal Opportunity Office. However, claims of unlawful harassment not brought to the attention of our Equal Opportunity Office within 45 days of their occurrence may not be accepted in a formal complaint of discrimination. Our Equal Opportunity Office may be reached at (202) 606-7503 (voice), (202) 606-3472 (TDD), eo@cns.gov, or through our Web site at [www.nationalservice.org](http://www.nationalservice.org).

We encourage, but do not require, volunteers, service participants, and other beneficiaries to first bring concerns about harassment to the director or appropriate supervisory personnel of the program or project. We likewise encourage programs and projects to facilitate prompt resolution of these concerns.

Directors of all programs and projects are requested to provide a copy of this policy to all volunteers or service participants.

# Civil Rights & Responsibilities Summary

VISTA members are protected by VISTA and the Corporation for National and Community Service from being subjected to discrimination or harassment. You have an obligation as a VISTA Supervisor to make sure you and your VISTA members do not subject anyone to discrimination or harassment. This applies to everyone your VISTAs come into contact with, including other VISTAs, clients, volunteers, and employees at your site.

The following information (including the next page) is provided to VISTA members and explains their civil rights relating to discrimination and harassment.

## What is Discrimination?

Discrimination is treating people differently because of who they are, where they come from, or the groups they belong to. Discrimination in a VISTA service setting is **illegal** when it targets a person or group based on such **non-merit factors** as race, gender, or religion, also known as **protected classes**.

### Protected Classes

The Corporation for National and Community Service defines protected classes as the following:

- Race, color, or national origin
- Sex/gender
- Disability (physical or mental)
- Age
- Religion
- Political affiliation
- Gender identity and expression
- Sexual orientation

### Illegal Discrimination

- Targets a person or group because of a difference AND singles them out for different treatment
- May be a one-time occurrence or part of an ongoing pattern
- Can happen to anyone

## What is Harassment?

Illegal harassment in a VISTA service setting is **severe and/or pervasive** verbal or non-verbal communication relating to an individual's gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, or any other **non-merit factor** that interferes with a VISTA's performance and/or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive service environment. Harassment can consist of spoken or written words, images, or actions and can happen to anyone. It includes but is not limited to:

- Explicit or implicit demands for sexual favors
- Pressure for one's company
- Unwelcome, persistent letters, phone calls, emails, or other media
- Distribution or display of offensive material
- Offensive looks or gestures, physical encroachment, or threatening behavior

### Illegal Harassment

- Includes—but is not limited to—sexual harassment
- Can be spoken words or unspoken actions
- Is more than just annoying or uncomfortable behavior
- Generally happens over a period of time
- Creates a hostile, intimidating, or offensive service environment
- Prevents a VISTA from serving effectively
- Can happen to anyone

# Civil Rights & Responsibilities

## Summary, cont.

### What Should I Do?

If you experience or witness discrimination or harassment, and if you feel safe and comfortable doing so, you can directly approach and talk to the person you suspect of engaging in harassing or discriminating behavior. If that doesn't work, or if you do not feel safe and comfortable doing so, you can talk to your VISTA supervisor.

If you cannot go to your supervisor, or you do and the matter is not resolved to your satisfaction, you can contact your state office (see the link to the list of state office contacts below). Finally, you can contact the CNCS Equal Opportunity Office (see contact information below). If you and/or your VISTA supervisor or state office contact chooses to contact the Equal Opportunity Office, note that claims must be made within 45 days of the incident.

### Useful Questions/Suggestions

If you think you have experienced or witnessed discrimination or harassment, these questions and suggestions may be useful:

- Have I (Can I) talk to the person involved?
- What assumptions might I be making? How can I check out these assumptions?
- Assume positive intent. Communicate to clarify.
- Use statements such as, "It appears to me that ..."
- Speak with a supervisor (if you can).
- Is there something I can learn from this?

### Where Can I Go for More Information?

The Corporation for National and Community Service takes discrimination and harassment very seriously and makes the following resources available to you:

**Corporation State Office Contacts** A list of state offices can be found at [www.nationalservice.gov/about/contact-us/state-offices](http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/contact-us/state-offices)

A complete list of the CNCS's official policies on discrimination and harassment can be found in the online VISTA Member Handbook at [www.vistacampus.gov/lessons/vista-member-handbook](http://www.vistacampus.gov/lessons/vista-member-handbook)

#### Contact Information

Equal Opportunity Office  
250 E Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20525

202-606-7503	<b>HOTLINE</b>
202-606-3472	<b>TTY</b>
202-606-3465	<b>FAX</b>
eo@cns.gov	<b>EMAIL</b>

# VISTA Leaders

*VISTA Leaders are former VISTAs, AmeriCorps members, or Peace Corps volunteers who demonstrated exemplary skills and leadership in community service. About 165 VISTA Leaders serve each year throughout the country with projects that support economic opportunity, education, access to food resources and more for economically disadvantaged individuals.*

## 1. Mission of a VISTA Leader

VISTA Leaders support and coordinate larger VISTA projects (involving at least six VISTAs) in their efforts to address the needs of low-income communities. They serve as role models, trainers, and resource providers who strengthen the capacity of VISTAs and VISTA projects. They serve different functions depending on the needs of the local projects, like recruiting and coordinating VISTAs; preparing in-service trainings; identifying new funding sources; and serving as liaisons with the community and the Corporation for National and Community Service.

## 2. Goals of the VISTA Leader Program

- Foster greater communication between VISTAs and their project sponsor, and among VISTAs within a state and a cluster.
- Provide additional support for VISTA members.
- Provide an extended service opportunity for outstanding VISTAs who demonstrate leadership abilities.
- Promote leadership skills in the service and nonprofit field.

## 3. Responsibilities of a VISTA Leader

Specific responsibilities vary, but most VISTA Leaders are involved in developing or expanding a new or existing VISTA project. Leaders help recruit, screen, and train VISTA members. They coordinate VISTAs and develop monitoring, reporting, and project management systems. Leaders promote information sharing; create a VISTA support network; develop in-service training workshops; conduct site visits; and create model programs. Many write grants, fundraise, and conduct broad-based public awareness campaigns. In general, they set an example of leadership for VISTAs: ensure positive relations, facilitate idea sharing, and mediate issues with the community, the project, supervisors, and VISTA members.

## 3. Responsibilities of a VISTA Leader, cont.

VISTA Leaders do not supervise VISTAs (or other CNCS-supported National Service Participants or volunteers). They are prohibited from preparing VISTA project applications or applying for other CNCS grants. They are also prohibited from preparing and submitting progress reports, although they often assist in gathering information from VISTAs and local site supervisors.

## 4. Requesting a VISTA Leader

Corporation State Offices discuss the opportunity to place a VISTA Leader with project sponsors. Coordination and planning should begin as the project is being developed or renewed for another year. Sponsors must request a Leader by including a specific position description in their project application to the State Office. If the need for a Leader develops after the project application has been approved, the assignment description should be submitted to the State Office for approval and the project application should be amended accordingly. The assignment description should also be used as a tool for recruiting.

## 5. Application Process

Once a Leader position is approved, the sponsor creates an opportunity listing for the position in the My AmeriCorps portal. A VISTA who wishes to serve as a Leader must complete and submit an application to that listing through the My AmeriCorps portal. The project sponsor reviews applications, conducts interviews, and selects a final applicant for the Leader position.

# VISTA Leaders, cont.

## 6. Selection of a Leader

VISTA Leaders are carefully selected on the basis of their service performance and their ability to communicate well with their peers. They are selected by the project sponsor and approved by the State Office. VISTAs who have completed at least one year of VISTA service with strong recommendations, outstanding performance, and demonstrated leadership ability are eligible to serve. VISTA Leaders are placed throughout the year.

## 7. Placement of a Leader

A specific assignment description for each Leader is developed by the project sponsor and submitted to the Corporation State Office. The sponsor reviews applications, conducts interviews (either by telephone or in person) and selects an applicant to serve as Leader. The Corporation State Office places the applicant into the VISTA Leader position.

## 8. Training

VISTA Leaders have three training opportunities during their year: VISTA Leader Orientation, Professional Development Webinars and the Action Learning Challenge. They can also receive one-on-one coaching from the Leader Training Team. Leaders also have access to a large collection of resources devoted to them on the VISTA Campus.

All VISTA Leaders attend the VISTA Leader Orientation, preferably within the first three months of starting their Leader year. The orientation is designed to enhance and reinforce the Leaders' understanding of important leadership capacities and the six VISTA Leader roles — mentor, ambassador, liaison, facilitator & educator, recruiter, and resource developer.

## 8. Training, cont.

After completing the orientation, Leaders can participate in monthly skill-building webinars on topics that enrich their professional and personal growth. Leaders also have the opportunity to apply for an Action Learning Challenge, an immersion-learning model that is designed to enhance professional skills through meeting a significant goal that will positively influence the future of the VISTA program.

To learn more about VISTA Leader training opportunities go to the Leaders area of the VISTA Campus.

## 9. Length of Service

An individual may serve a total of five full-year terms in VISTA. Technically, then, a VISTA Leader could serve a maximum of four years if the individual performed outstandingly and the State Office agrees that it benefits the project.

# Comparison of VISTA Leaders & Supervisor Roles

Because of their inherent skills and abilities, VISTA Leaders often take on more responsibility or receive more authority than is reasonable or appropriate. Keeping focused and within the limits of the Leader's roles are crucial to the Leader's success. To this end, regular communication between the Supervisor and the Leader is highly effective. It is imperative that VISTAs understand the distinctions between a Supervisor and Leader, and know to whom to turn for what they need. Co-facilitating a discussion with the VISTAs, and perhaps providing a reference sheet about procedures and points of contact are effective methods for Supervisors and Leaders to keep VISTAs informed.

## Examples of Appropriate Leader & Supervisor Roles

Scenario	Leader Support	Supervisor Contribution
<b>Conducting an On-Site Orientation and Training (OSOT)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collate orientation materials</li> <li>• Draft agenda</li> <li>• Help secure guests, speakers and facilitators</li> <li>• Participate in implementation of OSOT</li> <li>• Utilize facilitator / educator skills to achieve OSOT activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop OSOT plan</li> <li>• Finalize agenda</li> <li>• Ensure OSOT plan is submitted to CSO</li> <li>• Help secure guests, speakers and facilitators</li> <li>• Coordinate with Leader regarding OSOT</li> <li>• Implement OSOT</li> </ul>
<b>Recruiting and selecting new VISTAs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote position announcement through local venues</li> <li>• Assist in screening applications</li> <li>• Assist in setting up and participate in interviews of top applicants</li> <li>• Provide feedback to supervisor</li> <li>• Utilize VAD in interview process</li> <li>• Utilize recruiting and interview skills to achieve recruiting tasks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interview top candidates</li> <li>• Nominate candidates for selection and approval by CSO</li> <li>• Notify candidates of selection and approval</li> <li>• Ensure paperwork is completed</li> <li>• Accept/select candidates in eGrants/Portal</li> <li>• Utilize VAD in interview / selection process</li> </ul>
<b>Facilitating a successful year of service for VISTAs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make self available to VISTAs as a resource</li> <li>• Listen when VISTAs approach with problems and barriers</li> <li>• Assist VISTAs in identifying their options and creating their own solutions</li> <li>• Assist VISTAs in outlining their options for mediation, including informing supervisor</li> <li>• Involve supervisor if VISTAs cannot resolve issue themselves</li> <li>• Utilize skills as resource generator, mentor, ambassador, and liaison, as appropriate, to ensure a successful year for VISTAs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide ongoing and scheduled supervision to VISTAs</li> <li>• Utilize problem-solving and coaching techniques to help VISTAs resolve problems and barriers</li> <li>• Assist VISTAs in identifying options and solutions</li> <li>• Develop protocol for addressing conflict within group (including the Leader's role)</li> <li>• Schedule appropriate conference time with Leader for updates and feedback</li> </ul>

# Comparison of VISTA Leaders & Supervisor Roles, cont.

## *Examples of Appropriate Leader & Supervisor Roles, cont.*

Scenario	Leader Support	Supervisor Contribution
<i>A VISTA is habitually late</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure VISTAs know and understand policy and procedures for punctuality and project schedule(s)</li> <li>• If pattern persists and supervisor is unaware, communicate problem to supervisor and inform VISTAs of same</li> <li>• Let supervisor know if tardiness of VISTAs is a potential or real divisive issue for team</li> <li>• Utilize educator and liaison skills for achieving this task</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss the reasons for recent tardiness and explore how to improve punctuality with VISTA</li> <li>• Set/re-set timeliness expectations</li> <li>• Determine any organizational measures to be taken to address situation</li> <li>• Notify CSO, if situation merits</li> <li>• Follow-up with VISTA regarding effectiveness of corrective action</li> <li>• Coordinate with Leader as needed regarding VISTA</li> </ul>
<i>Reporting on project performance to CSO</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate collection of data from VISTAs</li> <li>• Clarify points in reports with VISTAs if required</li> <li>• Collate or categorize information</li> <li>• Assist in interpretation of data</li> <li>• Coordinate feedback with supervisor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtain data from Leader</li> <li>• Interpret data</li> <li>• Write report in eGrants</li> <li>• Ensure timeliness of reporting to CSO</li> <li>• Follow-up with Leader and/or VISTAs as necessary</li> </ul>
<i>Developing or refining Volunteer Assignment Description (VAD)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review VADs for clarity and accuracy</li> <li>• Suggest improvements or changes to supervisor</li> <li>• Clarify action steps for VISTAs when required</li> <li>• Offer feedback to VISTAs and supervisor to determine if tasks appropriately help achieve objectives</li> <li>• Utilize facilitator, educator, mentor skills on an ongoing basis to ensure successful implementation of VAD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish tasks to achieve goal(s)</li> <li>• Write VAD</li> <li>• Review VAD with VISTA on a consistent basis</li> <li>• Monitor achievement of objectives by setting appropriate expectations for progress and completion</li> <li>• Refine VAD as necessary on an ongoing basis</li> <li>• Identify needed feedback from Leader related to VAD progress</li> </ul>

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# VISTA Leaders & eGrants Accounts

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VISTA Leaders may be given the role of Grantee Recruiter in My AmeriCorps, through eGrants, to support a project sponsor's recruitment activities. For a list of user roles, please visit [www.nationalservice.gov/resources/americorps/whats-my-role-egrantsmy-americorps-user-roles-vista-programs](http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/americorps/whats-my-role-egrantsmy-americorps-user-roles-vista-programs).

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In the role of Grantee Recruiter, a VISTA Leader is able to edit service opportunity listings, search for and contact VISTA member candidates, and review applications.

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Although the role of Grantee Recruiter allows the user to approve or reject applications, a Leader may not do so. Only a project manager or supervisor may approve or reject applications.

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In addition, VISTA Leaders may not access eGrants to work on project-management tasks—progress reports, Sponsor Verification Forms, etc.—as this is a project staff function. Under no circumstance can a Leader have “grantee,” “grantee administrator,” or any other eGrants roles assigned to them. Failure to comply with these provisions by a project sponsor or Leader can lead to project closure.

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To hold the role of Grantee Recruiter, the Leader must apply for a separate eGrants account and the Grantee Administrator for the project may then approve the request by assigning the role of Grantee Recruiter to the Leader.

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VISTA Leaders may not use their supervisors' accounts and passwords.

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Steps to create an eGrants account can be found on pages 6-11 in the My AmeriCorps User Guide: [www.nationalservice.gov/resources/americorps/egrants-my-americorps-user-guide-vista-sponsors](http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/americorps/egrants-my-americorps-user-guide-vista-sponsors)

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If there are any questions or concerns regarding VISTA Leaders, please contact your State Office or email [vleader@cns.gov](mailto:vleader@cns.gov).

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# Income Disregard Provision Memo

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**DATE:** January 1, 2007  
**MEMORANDUM TO:** National Senior Service Corps Staff, VISTA Staff & Corporation State Office Staff  
**FROM:** Frank R. Trinity, General Counsel  
**SUBJECT:** Senior Companions, Foster Grandparent, Retired and Senior Volunteer and VISTA Programs—  
Income Disregard Provisions

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It continues to come to our attention that state and local governments, and on occasion federal entities, are not properly applying federal law governing the disregard of payments to Senior Companions, Foster Grandparent, Retired and Senior volunteer and VISTA members when determining eligibility for assistance and benefits.

*Section 404 of the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973, as amended, (DVSA), states, in relevant part, as follows:*

(f)(1) Notwithstanding any other provision of law except as may be provided expressly in limitation of this subsection, payments to volunteers under this Act shall not in any way reduce or eliminate the leave of or eligibility for assistance or services any such volunteers may be receiving under any governmental program, except that this paragraph shall not apply in the case of such payments when the Director determines that the value of all such payments, adjusted to reflect the number of hours such volunteers are serving, is equivalent to or greater than the minimum wage then in effect under the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 (29 U.S.C. § 201 et seq.) or the minimum wage, under the laws of the State where such volunteers are serving, whichever is greater.

(f)(2) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a person enrolled for fulltime service as a volunteer under Title I of this Act who was otherwise entitled to receive assistance or services under any governmental program prior to such volunteer's enrollment shall not be denied such assistance or services because of such volunteer's failure or refusal to register for, seek, or accept employment or training during the period of such service. 42 U.S.C. § 5044 (f)(1) and (2).

In a few cases, government agencies have erroneously attempted to substitute their judgments for the DVSA's authority in determining under (f)(1) if payments to participants are equivalent to or greater than the applicable minimum wage. Only the Corporation for National and Community Service may make this determination, and to date payments to participants under this Title have not been determined to exceed the federal or state minimum wage, whichever is greater.

*Section 418 of the DVSA also states as follows:*

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no payment for supportive services or reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses made to persons serving pursuant to Title II of this Act shall be subject to any tax or charge or be treated as wages or compensation for the purposes of unemployment, temporary disability, retirement, public assistance, workers' compensation, or similar benefit payments, or minimum wage laws. This section shall become effective with respect to all payments made after the effective date of this Act [October 1, 1973]. 42 U.S.C. § 5058

In summary, (1) a government program may not consider payments to individuals under the DVSA in determining to reduce or eliminate the individual's level of or eligibility for public assistance or services; (2) entitlements to assistance may not be denied because of a participant's failure or refusal to seek or accept employment or training, including those established for welfare to work programs; and (3) no payments to participants shall be considered wages or unemployment for the purposes of any tax, unemployment, workers' compensation, or for similar benefit payments.

In addition, the legislative history concerning this matter indicates that Congress did not want to damage efforts to recruit participants by reducing or eliminating government assistance for them and placing financial burdens on sponsors of the programs.

This memorandum should be forwarded to anyone with questions concerning this matter. In the event this memorandum does not resolve the issue, please contact this office immediately.

# AmeriCorps VISTA Project Report Supplement

## Background & Purpose

The Corporation for National and Community Service provides the VISTA Progress Report Supplement (VPRS) as an addendum to the regular quarterly progress report required of organizations approved to sponsor a VISTA project. The VPRS is submitted on an annual basis and is intended to cover activities over a single fiscal year, regardless of the individual program year. The VPRS is the vehicle through which projects submit specific data elements needed by the Corporation to report on performance. Corporation personnel will use the reports to track Corporation- and VISTA-specific performance measures on an annual basis.

## Submission Guidelines

All VISTA projects are required to submit the VPRS once per year. The project supervisor should complete the VPRS. AmeriCorps VISTA members should be allowed to review the completed reports, but should not be required to complete the report.

## Reporting Period

All VPRS submissions are due upon completion of the fiscal year. Reporting period covers October 1 through September 30. The due date is October 31.

## Terms & Definitions

See the Performance Measures Guidance for AmeriCorps VISTA for terms and definitions. The terms have very specific definitions and by reporting against any of them, you are indicating that you are in compliance with those definitions.

## Performance Measures: Capacity Building

*Please enter a whole number in those measures applicable to your AmeriCorps VISTA project. You must provide data for at least one measure.*

Dollar value of cash resources leveraged by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants

Dollar value of in-kind resources leveraged by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants

Number of community volunteers recruited by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants

Hours of service contributed by community volunteers who were recruited by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants

Number of community volunteers managed by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants

Hours of service contributed by community volunteers who were managed by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants

Number of veterans and military family members engaged in providing services through CNCS-supported programs

Number of staff and community volunteers that received training (of one or more types) as a result of capacity-building services provided by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants

Number of organizations that received capacity-building services from CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants

Number of organizations that completed a community assessment identifying goals and recommendations with the assistance of CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants

# AmeriCorps VISTA Project Report Supplement, cont.

## Performance Measures: Capacity Building, cont.

Number of organizations implementing three or more effective volunteer management practices as a result of capacity-building services provided by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants

Number of organizations reporting that capacity-building activities provided by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants have helped to make the organization more efficient

Number of organizations reporting that capacity-building activities provided by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants have helped to make the organization more effective

Number of new systems and business processes (technology, performance management, training, etc.) or enhancements to existing systems and business processes put in place as a result of capacity-building services provided by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants

Number of organizations that have experienced an increase in requests for their programs and services as a result of capacity-building services provided by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants

Number of additional activities completed and/or program outputs produced by the program as a result of capacity-building services provided by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants in:

- |                               |                          |                                    |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| (a) Disaster Services         | (b) Economic Opportunity | (c) Education                      |
| (d) Environmental Stewardship | (e) Healthy Futures      | (f) Veterans and Military Families |

Number of additional types of services offered by organizations as a result of capacity-building services provided by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants in:

- |                               |                          |                                    |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| (a) Disaster Services         | (b) Economic Opportunity | (c) Education                      |
| (d) Environmental Stewardship | (e) Healthy Futures      | (f) Veterans and Military Families |

## Performance Measures: Beneficiaries

*Please enter a whole number for any measure(s) that apply to your project. Please review the Guidance. Not all projects will have data for these measures.*

Number of disadvantaged youth receiving services provided by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants in:

- |                               |                          |                                    |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| (a) Disaster Services         | (b) Economic Opportunity | (c) Education                      |
| (d) Environmental Stewardship | (e) Healthy Futures      | (f) Veterans and Military Families |

Number of veterans that received CNCS-supported assistance

Number of veterans' family members that received CNCS-supported assistance

Number of family members of active-duty military that received CNCS-supported assistance

Number of military service members that received CNCS-supported assistance

# Glossary

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## AmeriCorps website

The official website of the AmeriCorps programs; offers information directed at sponsor and grantee organizations as well as individuals interested in national service.  
[www.AmeriCorps.gov](http://www.AmeriCorps.gov)

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## Capacity Building

To strengthen, expand, and increase the reach of anti-poverty programs; to work on projects with staff and volunteers, rather than directly with people in need.

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## CNCS State Office (CSO)

Federal offices staffed by federal employees in the state. They conduct public outreach and program support; they are also directly responsible for developing grants and projects and for overseeing all Senior Corps and AmeriCorps VISTA projects within their states.

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## Community Empowerment

Ensures involvement of community residents in planning, developing, and implementing a VISTA project that is responsive and relevant to the lives of the community residents and taps into existing community strengths and resources.

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## Concept Paper

A document submitted before the project application describing the community needs as they relate to the reduction of poverty and how the VISTA resource will be used.

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## Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)

An independent federal agency created by the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993. The Corporation engages Americans through service in AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve America, and the Senior Corps programs.

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## Cost Share

A sponsoring organization pays the living allowance for some or all of its VISTAs, while the VISTA program (CNCS) covers the cost of some member benefits and services for the AmeriCorps VISTAs and your organization.

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## eGrants

An online system in which project applications are submitted, assessed, approved or disapproved; also used by programs to track and report on their VISTA grants.  
[egrants.cns.gov](http://egrants.cns.gov)

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## In-Service Training (IST)

Follow-up training that provides VISTAs the opportunity to develop specific knowledge and skills needed to perform their assignments. Training takes place via the VISTA Campus or with support from the sponsoring organization when possible.

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## Living Allowance

An allowance that is meant to cover basic living necessities during a VISTA's service period. It is set at the rate based on poverty income for a single individual in the area and is deposited directly into the member's account.

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## Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)

A legally binding document that states the specific obligations of each party, as well as joint responsibilities of the project and the Corporation state director.

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## My AmeriCorps Portal

A Web site designed to help your VISTA enter and prepare for his/her year of service. This is where people apply to become VISTA members. [my.americorps.gov](http://my.americorps.gov)

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# Glossary, cont.

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## Pre-Service Orientation (PSO)

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An event VISTA candidates attend in person to receive orientation to CNCS, VISTA, and their role as a VISTA member. PSO ends with the oath to serve as a VISTA.

## Project Application

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Details the specific problem the project will address in the low-income community, provides a set of goals and objectives for the overall project, and includes a project plan that describes the activities the member will undertake.

## Project Description

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Gives details about your organization, its mission and activities, and the low-income population served. It defines the VISTA project and how it fits into the overall mission of your organization.

## Project Plan

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A document that describes a community need and how the VISTA project will meet that need. A project plan is composed of one or more action plans; each action plan contains a community need statement, a goal statement, and milestones for meeting that goal.

## Sponsoring Organization

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A federal, state or local government agency; a government of a tribal nation; or a private nonprofit organization (faith- or community-based) that has an AmeriCorps VISTA member placed in the organization.

## Sustainability

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Sustainability is the process of setting local volunteers, resources, and programs in place they will continue long after the VISTA project ends.

## Term of Service

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The length of time a VISTA member has agreed to serve. In most cases, the “term of service” is one year, but it may also be a two-month summer term.

## Virtual Member Orientation (VMO)

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Members participate in a series of asynchronous, self-directed online courses prior to the first day of arriving on site. Some courses will be mandatory, and “activation” by the VMSU will be contingent upon their completion.

## VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)

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A description of specific activities a VISTA engages in during the service year; these activities support the success of the sponsor’s VISTA project plan.

## VISTA Campus

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An online learning center tailored to VISTA members, supervisors, and state offices with interactive tutorials and activities, forums, and rich materials to connect those in the VISTA community. [www.vistacampus.gov](http://www.vistacampus.gov)

# Managing Your VISTA Project: Contacts & Resources

## About us

Corporation for National & Community Service  
[www.nationalservice.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov)

### About VISTA

[www.nationalservice.gov/programs/amicorps/amicorps-vista](http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/americorps/amicorps-vista)

## Project Support & Policy

### Your CNCS State Office

[www.nationalservice.gov/about/contact-us/state-offices](http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/contact-us/state-offices)

### VISTA Member Handbook

[www.vistacampus.gov/lessons/vista-member-handbook](http://www.vistacampus.gov/lessons/vista-member-handbook)

### VISTA Supervisor Manual

[www.vistacampus.gov/lessons/vista-supervisors-manual](http://www.vistacampus.gov/lessons/vista-supervisors-manual)

### eGrants Resources

[www.vistacampus.gov/supervisors/egrants](http://www.vistacampus.gov/supervisors/egrants)

### CNCS Office of Inspector General

- *report fraud, waste or abuse of federal resources*

[www.cncsoig.gov](http://www.cncsoig.gov) or 800-452-8210 or [hotline@cncsoig.gov](mailto:hotline@cncsoig.gov)

## Member Support

### My AmeriCorps

- *recruit VISTAs, complete in-processing forms, apply for education award, and track living allowance and tax statements*

[my.americorps.gov](http://my.americorps.gov)

### Service & Inclusion

- *include people with disabilities in service*

[www.serviceandinclusion.org](http://www.serviceandinclusion.org)

### VISTA Member Support (VMSU) & National Service Hotline

- *ask about PSO travel, living allowances, benefits, and emergencies*

[questions.nationalservice.gov](http://questions.nationalservice.gov) or 800-942-2677

## Performance Measurement

### AmeriCorps VISTA Performance Measurement

- *learn CNCS policy related to performance measurement*

[www.nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/vista](http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/vista)

## Training & Professional Development

### VISTA Campus

- *access interactive tutorials, documents, VISTA map, and discussion forums for VISTA members, leaders, and supervisors*

[www.vistacampus.gov](http://www.vistacampus.gov)

### VISTA 101: Understanding VISTA

[www.vistacampus.gov/resources/vista-101-understanding-vista-0](http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/vista-101-understanding-vista-0)

### National Service Knowledge Networks

- *locate resources for non-VISTA national service programs*

[www.nationalservice.gov/resources](http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources)

## VISTA Member Benefits

### Healthcare Benefits

[americorpsvista.imglobal.com](http://americorpsvista.imglobal.com) or 855-851-2974

### Eli Segal AmeriCorps Education Award

[www.nationalservice.gov/resources/edaward](http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/edaward)

### Child Care Benefit

[www.americorpschildcare.com](http://www.americorpschildcare.com) or 855-886-0687

## Post-Service Resources

### VISTA Alumni

[www.vistacampus.gov/alumni-welcome-and-faq](http://www.vistacampus.gov/alumni-welcome-and-faq)

### AmeriCorps Alums

[www.americorpsalums.org](http://www.americorpsalums.org)

### What's Next: Life After Service

- *plan your next move after AmeriCorps*

[www.nationalservice.gov/resources/member-and-volunteer-development/whats-next-life-after-your-service-year](http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/member-and-volunteer-development/whats-next-life-after-your-service-year)

## Social Networks

### Facebook

[www.facebook.com/AmeriCorpsVISTA](http://www.facebook.com/AmeriCorpsVISTA)

### Twitter

[twitter.com/AmeriCorpsVISTA](http://twitter.com/AmeriCorpsVISTA)

### LinkedIn

[www.linkedin.com/company/amicorps-vista](http://www.linkedin.com/company/amicorps-vista)

### VISTA Forums

[www.vistacampus.gov/forums](http://www.vistacampus.gov/forums)

# VISTA Supervisor Webinars



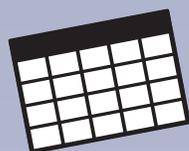
VISTA Supervisor webinars cover a variety of topics and are offered regularly. Join a session to enhance your leadership skills and connect with other VISTA Supervisors.

## Sample Topics

- How to recruit and retain members
- Record keeping and reporting
- Supervisor's roles and responsibilities
- How to create an effective VAD

[vistacampus.gov/webinars](http://vistacampus.gov/webinars)

# Online Courses (for members)



AmeriCorps VISTA offers 10-week online courses designed to enhance members' capacity to serve as VISTAs and to help them build a professional skill set.

## Each student will:

- Receive individual support and connect with other VISTAs
- Apply course activities and materials for carrying out their VAD
- Earn three transferable undergraduate college credit recommendations

Online courses are offered three times a year and are available to eligible VISTAs at no cost. Check the Online Courses page of the VISTA Campus for more information.

## Courses

### Volunteer Mobilization

- Design volunteer position descriptions
- Develop effective volunteer recruitment strategies
- Conduct volunteer interviews
- Develop volunteer screening practices
- Create engaging and useful volunteer orientations and trainings

### Resource Development

- Raise funds and write grants ethically
- Identify and communicate with donors
- Plan and develop fundraising events
- Research and write letters of inquiry for grants

[vistacampus.gov/onlinecourses](http://vistacampus.gov/onlinecourses)



[facebook.com/AmeriCorpsVISTA](https://facebook.com/AmeriCorpsVISTA)



[youtube.com/nationalservice](https://youtube.com/nationalservice)



[linkedin.com/company/americorps-vista](https://linkedin.com/company/americorps-vista)



[instagram.com/nationalservice](https://instagram.com/nationalservice)



[twitter.com/AmeriCorpsVISTA](https://twitter.com/AmeriCorpsVISTA)