



WHAT IS AMERICORPS*VISTA?

The AmeriCorps*VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) program has been addressing the needs of impoverished communities since 1965. In total, more than 146,000 individuals have joined forces with 13,000 local organizations to strengthen poor communities and help people escape poverty across the nation. AmeriCorps*VISTA provides full-time members to faith-based and other community-based organizations and public agencies to create and expand programs that bring low-income individuals and communities out of poverty. Each year, more than 6,500 AmeriCorps*VISTA members leverage human, financial, and material resources to increase the capacity of thousands of low-income communities across the country to solve their own problems.

WHO ARE AMERICORPS*VISTA MEMBERS?

Members are 18 years of age or older and typically have college degrees or at least three years of work experience. Host sites are responsible for recruiting VISTA members and the SGSM Network is available to provide technical assistance in recruiting.

AmeriCorps*VISTA members are men and women of various faiths, races, ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds, and physical and mental abilities. Many members are recent college graduates looking for an opportunity to serve a community while gaining real world experience and skills they might not necessarily be exposed to elsewhere. Some members come from the local community being served. Some are involved citizens with significant work and community experience. Still, other members are recently retired professionals looking for a meaningful way to spend their retirement years. They are interested in providing their time and skills to benefit the community. Members may not have any other employment or attend school during their term of service.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. Members must be placed in a capacity building role for the entire term of service. Proposals must demonstrate that the position provides a direct benefit valued by the community. Activities cannot duplicate routine functions of or displace paid employees.
2. Projects must address a significant community need for which there is limited funding.
3. All projects must address at least one of the VISTA Programming Priorities as addressed on pages 3 and 4: Ex-Offender Reentry, Supporting Tribal Communities, Financial Asset Development, Strengthening America's Children and Families, Older Americans in Poverty, or Supporting Rural Communities.
4. The project **may not** include direct service or administrative duties that support general organizational goals such as clerical or janitorial responsibilities, lunch or recess duty or data entry *unless* these responsibilities are shared by all members of the organization. For example, if everyone at the organization takes turns taking out the trash, VISTA members are expected to serve as part of the team.

5. The impact of service provided must be measurable.
6. Placement sites must have a Drug Free Work Place Policy and a Non-Discrimination Policy.
7. Placement sites must be able to effectively recruit, train, support and supervise the member(s).
8. Placement Sites must provide a comprehensive on-site orientation and training for members and dedicate \$250 for training and development for the VISTA member to receive additional training.
9. Placement Sites are eligible to have a VISTA member serve with their organization, in the same position, for up to 3 years. Each year is meant to build on the previous year: Year 1 – member establishes and creates a program or project, Year 2– member continuing to create program and begin to create structure for program to be sustainable, Year 3 – member should focus mostly on making the program sustainable.
10. The project must not include any of the following prohibited activities for members:

PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES

Federal law and the Corporation for National and Community Service policy prohibit AmeriCorps programs and their members from engaging in certain activities. Examples of such activities include, but are not limited to, the following:

- AmeriCorps*VISTA service requires a full immersion in the project and community, both full and part-time employment are prohibited. Members must remain available for service without regard to regular working hours at all times. For the same reason, full-time enrollment in an educational institution is prohibited. Part-time enrollment in an educational institution is generally prohibited. One course may be authorized if: (a) the course is directly related to project assignment; or (b) the course is part of the member’s career development plan developed in coordination with his or her supervisor. More than one course may be authorized if enrollment in the course(s) (6 hours or less) is required for Pell Grant eligibility. Note: Additional educational credit(s) may be received for AmeriCorps*VISTA service and training if allowed by the institution, but this cannot include enrollment in additional school courses or class time. Enrollment in an educational institution requires approval from the SGSM Network VISTA Supervisor and Corporation for National and Community Service State Director.
- Any efforts to influence legislation, including lobbying for AmeriCorps.
- Organizing or engaging in protests, petitions, boycotts or strikes.
- Assisting, promoting or deterring union organizing.
- Impairing existing contracts or collective bargaining agreements.
- Engaging in partisan political activities or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office.
- Participating in, or endorsing, events or activities that are likely to include advocacy for or against political parties, political platforms, political candidates, proposed legislation, or elected officials.
- Engaging in religious instruction; conducting worship services; providing instruction as part of a program that includes mandatory religious instruction or worship; constructing or operating facilities devoted to religious instruction or worship; maintaining facilities

primarily or inherently devoted to religious instruction or worship; or engaging in any form of religious proselytizing.

- Providing a direct benefit to:
 - A for-profit entity;
 - A labor union;
 - A partisan political organization; or
 - An organization engaged in the religious activities described in the preceding sub-clause, unless Grant funds are not used to support the religious activities.
 - A nonprofit entity that fails to comply with the restrictions contained in section 501(c)(3) of Title 26, except that nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent Members from engaging in advocacy activities undertaken at their own initiative.
- Performing services or duties that have been performed by or were assigned to any:
 - Presently employed worker;
 - Employee who recently resigned or was discharged;
 - Employee who is subject to a reduction in force or who has recall rights pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement or applicable personnel procedures;
 - Employee who is on leave (terminal, temporary, vacation, emergency or sick); or
 - Employee who is on strike or is being locked out.
- At no time should a member be hired to perform any work for the sponsoring organization even if it is unrelated to the member's service. Should a sponsor site offer a paid position to a member during his or her service year, the sponsor will be responsible for the full cash match per the contract. CBVC will not be responsible for a replacement AmeriCorps member at that site.
- Other activities as the Corporation determine will be prohibited, upon notice.

HOST SITE RESPONSIBILITIES

Hosting an AmeriCorps*VISTA member through the SGSN Network is a unique opportunity for organizations to build capacity while providing a meaningful service and development experience for the member. SGSN Network feels that the following requirements enable both members and sponsors to maximize the benefits of a one-year placement.

1. SUPERVISION AND MENTORING

- Provide the member with an immediate and available supervisor for the full term of service that is available to meet with the member for a **minimum of one hour each week** to review past activities and set future goals in addition to providing **on site orientation and training** for the member upon arrival at the site.
- Assist the member in identifying opportunities to meet professional development goals through their service and support the member's participation in SGSN Network meetings and training.
- **If your organization is accepted, Site Supervisors are required to attend the AmeriCorps*VISTA Supervisor Training.** Training dates vary throughout the year: (exact locations to be announced).

2. PROJECT SUPPORT

- Provide the member with a well-defined project work plan that has clear goals, activities, and outcomes.

- Provide adequate office space, office equipment, tools and materials for the member to perform service. The member should have reasonable access to a desk, telephone and computer.
 - Provide comprehensive on-site orientation and training when the VISTA member starts and dedicate at least \$250 for training and development for each VISTA member to receive additional training.
 - Provide **transportation or mileage reimbursement** for VISTA members during the established service hours in accordance with the policies of the placement site.
 - Support member participation in VISTA trainings, national service day activities, and other required activities.
3. OUTREACH
- Conduct outreach within the sponsoring organization and the community to increase awareness of the service AmeriCorps*VISTA members provide the community.
4. RISK MANAGEMENT
- Establish safety guidelines and rules that ensure the well-being of the VISTA members and participants in the sponsoring organization's program.
5. REPORTING
- Complete quarterly project reports documenting progress on meeting anticipated outcomes.
 - Evaluate members at least once a year with forms provided.
 - Participate in site visits with SGSM and / or AmeriCorps VISTA state staff.