



# MERCY CORPS NORTHWEST VISTA PROGRAM



**2019-2020**

## **MISSION**

The Mercy Corps Northwest VISTA Team is a project of Mercy Corps Northwest and AmeriCorps VISTA. We work to create sustainable change among low-income communities through financial education, asset and workforce development, microenterprise, and affordable housing. Our guiding purpose runs parallel to the international work of our parent organization, Mercy Corps: *to alleviate suffering, poverty and oppression by helping people build secure, productive and just communities.*

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# The Mercy Corps Northwest VISTA Program

## OUR ORGANIZATION

The Mercy Corps Northwest VISTA Program supports a network of AmeriCorps VISTAs administered through the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). The MCNW VISTA Program is hosted by Mercy Corps Northwest (MCNW), a registered nonprofit organization in Portland that alleviates poverty through microfinance and asset development, prison reentry, and business education services. MCNW works with nonprofits and local governments to select and place MCNW VISTA members throughout Oregon.

## OUR PROGRAMS

From city governments to community-based organizations, MCNW VISTA members serve at a diverse group of organizations. VISTAs assist projects that build the **long-term capacity of low-income** communities through **results-oriented, data-driven** programs. In the past, our target areas have included innovative financial education, asset development, job training, prison reentry support, and affordable housing. Though our projects target historically underrepresented groups, MCNW VISTA Program initiatives serve all Oregonians by creating dynamic communities that are integrated, educated, and empowered.

## AMERICORPS VISTA

AmeriCorps VISTA is the national service program designed specifically to fight poverty. Authorized in 1964 and founded as Volunteers in Service to America in 1965, VISTA was incorporated into the AmeriCorps network of programs in 1993. **We're proud to say that VISTA has been on the front lines in the fight against poverty in America for over 50 years.**

VISTA members with MCNW commit to serve full-time for a year at a nonprofit organization or local government agency, working to improve opportunities around housing, employment, job skills, microbusiness, and other projects related to developing economic opportunities for low income communities. With passion, commitment, and hard work, sites can partner with MCNW and VISTA to create or expand programs designed to bring individuals and communities out of poverty.

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# What We Do

## GOALS AND OUTCOMES

Contingent on congressional funding, 8 AmeriCorps VISTA members will be placed throughout Oregon in the coming service year August 2019-2020. Placement sites are eligible to have a VISTA member serve with their organization for up to three years but must reapply for the VISTA annually. The service of these members around Oregon has helped many organizations establish new programs and take existing programs to the next level in their anti-poverty work.

Many host organizations work specifically with low-income populations in both rural and economically distressed urban areas. The VISTA members, however, must **exclusively** support low-income persons through **indirect** service by building the capacity of their host organization to achieve its mission in the community. VISTA members serve full-time for a year as part of a statewide team coordinated by a VISTA Supervisor and VISTA Leader who serve at MCNW.

The Leader and Supervisor provide support for sites and VISTA members by helping recruit VISTA members, coordinating training programs for members and supervisors, monitoring outcomes and quality of work, liaising between the sites and CNCS, promoting the MCNW VISTA Program and member sites, mediating conflicts, clarifying policy, and acting as a resource for supervisors and members. Specifically, MCNW VISTA Program administration:

- Assists sites with required paperwork related to the VISTA project, including site applications.
- Aggregates MCNW VISTA Program data and reports to CNCS on behalf of sites.
- Conducts one in-person site visit during the first six months of the VISTA term.
- Manages member payroll and site payments.
- Provides technical assistance, training, and support to site supervisors.
- Covers travel costs for VISTAs to attend service events required by MCNW.
- Provides member with training funds and mentorship for additional training during term.
- Maintains program records as required by CNCS and advises sites of changes to CNCS policies.
- Assists with member recruitment and interviewing.
- Serves a mediatory function, when needed.
- Coordinates two multiday training events, two day of service events, and one end of service celebration event for members.

# What VISTAs Do

## INDIRECT SERVICE AND SCOPE OF SERVICE

VISTAs perform indirect service, which means they help build the capacity of organizations to then deliver valuable services to people living in poverty. VISTAs perform indirect capacity building activities that focus on creating sustainable projects in low-income communities and the organizations that serve them. VISTA members do not conduct direct service. **100% of VISTA members' efforts must exclusively benefit low income populations.**

VISTAs typically create new programs, coordinate and expand existing programs, write grants for **specific** activities and programs (not the organization as a whole), develop funding and outreach plans, and recruit volunteers.

Please note that VISTAs, while based in an office, do not provide general administrative support such as that provided by HR representatives or administrative assistants. Additionally, VISTA members are generally not approved to conduct activities that exclusively benefit member agencies. For example, a VISTA could establish a curriculum for tutoring program, recruit and train volunteers, and raise money for the program—but would not tutor the children. Examples of recent projects include:

- Obtaining funding and creating donor databases for a specific program, and developing a directory of template language for grant writing to ensure programmatic sustainability.
- Building partnerships with local businesses, nonprofit organizations, schools, and stakeholders.
- Researching and developing a curriculum for a financial literacy course, and securing and training volunteers to teach the course.

## BENEFITS

Part of the commitment for AmeriCorps VISTA Members is to experience what it is like to live in poverty. Therefore, they are not paid a salary. Instead, they receive a taxable living allowance of about \$14,665 per year in Multnomah, Clackamas, Washington, Yamhill and Columbia counties; and about \$12,312 in the remaining Oregon counties. In addition they receive a basic health benefit, loan forbearance on eligible student loans, and childcare (if eligible).

AmeriCorps VISTA Members have the option to receive the Segal Education Award of \$6,095 or a \$1,800 cash stipend upon successful completion of their year of service. The education award can be used to cover the costs of future education or to repay qualified student loans. Some universities provide matching scholarships for former VISTAs. VISTA service may be counted towards the public service loan forgiveness program, which provides federal student loan

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forgiveness to public and nonprofit employees after 10 years of minimum loan payments and service and/or work in the nonprofit or public sectors.

Beyond these benefits, AmeriCorps VISTA members have the opportunity to gain skills, take on leadership roles, work with many partnering agencies, build networks, and help design and implement innovative programs, giving them valuable experience and a sense of satisfaction from having contributed to the community. **We endeavor to sponsor only VISTA projects that provide members with learning opportunities beyond those typical of entry-level positions.**

## RESTRICTIONS

There are restrictions placed on what VISTAs can and can't do. Members may not perform any duties that have not been approved by the CNCS state office, nor may they perform **any** direct service. Additional information on restrictions on VISTA service can be found in the "VISTA Prohibited Activities" document. Violation of these restrictions is cause for removal of a VISTA from a host site without a refund to the site. VISTAs are not to be treated as staff at your organization though they should generally follow the same rules and policies as other employees. VISTA members' obligations are first to CNCS, then MCNW, and finally to your organization. However, **VISTAs are not employees; they are national service volunteers working in partnership with your organization.** Additional support of the member's professional development is expected of supervisors. **By applying for a VISTA your organization consents to oversight in VISTA-related matters from CNCS and MCNW.** Prior to the VISTA member's start, sites are required to sign a MOU that outlines restrictions of the VISTA position including nondiscrimination and sexual harassment provisions. The following are some of the major federal restrictions on the use of AmeriCorps VISTA positions:

- VISTAs are not permitted to engage in any political or lobbying activities, including voter registration drives and pro- or anti- labor organizing.
- VISTAs are not permitted to proselytize or engage in related activities while on duty.
- VISTAs may not supplant, replace, or eliminate staff positions.
- VISTAs cannot be subject to physical examinations, vaccination requirements, or similar health-related restrictions. Sites must waive such requirements for a VISTA.
- VISTAs are not to be used in roles that are centered on direct service, nor are they permitted to help others in the office with direct service or activities unrelated to programs not included in their Volunteer Assignment Descriptions (VADs).
- VISTAs may not perform general office work or support projects that focus on developing staff members or the internal processes of the organization.

There are no exceptions whatsoever to these provisions. **By responding to this RFP with an application your organization acknowledges and consents to all provisions herein, as well**

as all relevant federal, state, and local regulations concerning all national service programs. Should you be awarded a VISTA member your organization agrees to be bound such provisions and all others detailed in the AmeriCorps VISTA handbook, AmeriCorps VISTA program guidance, and all guidance provided by CNCS and the federal government relevant to the AmeriCorps VISTA program.

Therefore, your organization may have to make accommodations in order for a VISTA and his/her project to adhere fully to all regulations. For example, if it is an expectation in your organization that staff help support other programs by taking on tasks related to those other programs when their load is light VISTA members **must** be exempted from this expectation. They cannot take on **any** tasks unrelated to their VAD. Instead, when their load is light, VISTAs can pursue appropriate activities such as professional development, adding to a binder of work or a portfolio to pass on to the next VISTA, or conducting research concerning the nonprofit field or skills relevant to their VAD. If needed, tasks may be added to the VAD, **with approval from CNCS**.

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# What You Do

## SITE AND PROJECT FOCUS

MCNW VISTA sites must fall under one of the following categories:

- Public, private, or faith-based nonprofit organizations, including schools, registered appropriately as non-profits or public agencies with the IRS.
- Government agencies (city, county, regional, state, tribal or federal).

MCNW VISTA projects **may not involve direct service**. Your project must fall under the following approaches to community-based poverty alleviation:

- **Economic Opportunity:** including projects focused on microenterprise development/entrepreneurship development, financial literacy, financial asset building, IDAs, job training, and long-term housing.

## ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The host site must have the capacity to support a VISTA member with time and resources. Supervisors must be able to devote energy towards managing and guiding the VISTA, amounting to a commitment of *about five hours* per week. This is critical for a successful experience for both the VISTA member and the host site.

MCNW requires your organization to provide materials necessary for the VISTA to accomplish his or her work. **Required materials include but are not limited to an office location, personal work computer, desk space and chair, high speed internet access, personal email, phone, and phone number.** The desk may not be located in a position that would compel a member to perform direct service (such as a front desk). The member's phone number cannot be the organization's main line. The member must be situated similarly to staff of comparable rank. If travel is required for service, your site is required by federal legislation to cover the cost of mileage or public transit or provide transportation. **The host organization must have at least 1.0 FTE of staff to qualify for a VISTA.** The VISTA must be located at the same physical location as his/her supervisor.

We consider proposals from organizations of all sizes. We have seen some large successes from small organizations. However, we generally prefer that sites have a staff capacity of at least 3.0 FTE in order to provide plenty of oversight. Additionally, we expect that sites will generally operate on some semblance of a standard work schedule (M-F 9:00-5:00 or M-T 8:00-6:00), have in place administrative procedures and policies (usually in the form of an HR or employee manual), and

ensure that the member will generally be accompanied at the office by other staff. While we absolutely encourage small organizations to apply we invite them to explain how they will provide substantial supervision to a member. Smaller organizations are encouraged to discuss these matters with the VISTA supervisor prior to responding to the RFP.

## EXPENSES

MCNW requires affiliate organizations to share the cost of an AmeriCorps VISTA. **Depending on the number of host sites enrolled**, each host site will pay between \$7,000 and \$9,000, approximately. We cannot provide a firm cost share amount until we have filled sites for the service term. The amount is billed in two installments, one prior to the VISTA member's start date and one 6 months into the VISTA's year of service.

Our cost share is highly subsidized with federal funds and additional personnel and material capital provided by MCNW. Including member supervision, support, and training, the actual cost of each VISTA member to MCNW is about \$24,000-\$26,000 per year, meaning that positions are subsidized by about \$19,000 each.

While we know our cost share can be high for some organizations we provide a high dollar-to-value ratio by recruiting only excellent members and providing a high level of support to our partner agencies.

Cost share funds are used to support the VISTA members through training and support during the VISTA year of service and to provide nearly fulltime supervision for the project, which includes all federal reporting, recruitment and placement with CNCS and liability for members and programming. A recent estimate by CNCS demonstrates that the actual value of the hours donated by each VISTA member to the host site is over \$45,000. Further, vast majority of site supervisors report that VISTA members have helped make their organizations more dynamic, engaging, efficient, and well known in the community.

In addition to the cost share, host sites are required to provide the following:

- Host site supervisor's transportation costs associated with MCNW Site Supervisor Training
- Any project-specific training for the VISTA member, as determined by host sites
- All related travel expenses for the VISTA associated with carrying out the VISTA project (with exception of VISTA required trainings hosted by CNCS and MCNW)
- Purchase of supplies and materials necessary to develop the project (including office supplies and equipment)

Though **not required**, we ask that sites help with and support VISTA members in providing professional development funds for members as well as navigating the spectrum of resources available to low-income persons, including: affordable housing, connections to low-cost food support, and utility assistance.

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## REFUNDS

If a VISTA member leaves service prior to fulfilling their full year commitment a partial refund **may** be applied at the discretion of MCNW if the member is removed for medical reasons, a family emergency, deployment for military service, or enrollment in another AmeriCorps program or Peace Corps. If a member departs service for personal reasons or if MCNW and CNCS determine that a member should be removed from your organization a refund will not be issued except in extreme circumstances and at the sole discretion of MCNW. If a member is moved from the host site or is terminated from service before or on 181 days of service the host site may, conditionally and dependent upon cause and circumstances, be released from the remainder of the contract. **If the departing VISTA member has served 182 days or more no refund whatsoever will be provided and the host site is required to pay the full cost of the year of service.**

## MANAGEMENT EXPECTATIONS

MCNW's VISTA Program requires that **supervisors make a time commitment of about five hours per week** to supervise and support the VISTA member's activities. This includes direct meetings with the member to determine progress towards goals, answering questions, providing resources for the member in their work, and introducing the VISTA member to community partners, etc. This can include activities such as joint visits to board meetings, working together on a project, and similar activities. Sites **must** allow their organization's VISTA member to attend trainings held by MCNW and/or CNCS. Site supervisors are responsible for semi-annual, quarterly, and monthly reporting to MCNW. Site supervisors and members must also be available to MCNW staff for conducting an annual site visit as well as occasional phone check-ins to monitor project progress and supervisor-VISTA member relationships. MCNW may request that or make mutually agreed-upon arrangements for a member be moved under another supervisor at the host site if circumstances so dictate. It is expected that supervisors will be responsible for providing a pleasant and productive service site. Failure to do so may be cause for moving the member to a new host site. Supervisors must notify the MCNW VISTA Supervisor if a VISTA does not report to their site, or if there is any difficulty with the VISTA or the VISTA projects, including but not limited to interpersonal challenges, changes in organizational funding or structure, possible delays to VISTA projects, and internal resistance to the VISTA's efforts.

**Staff at your organization must be briefed on what a VISTA can and cannot do.** They must understand that VISTA members cannot provide general administrative support to your organization and that they are national service members, not interns or employees or standard volunteers, and that they cannot help or be asked to help with projects unrelated to their VADs.

**Supervisors are required to attend one half-day training and orientation prior to the VISTAs' start date.** The purpose of the webinar is to help ensure an efficient recruitment process and to

secure your organization a VISTA of best fit. The training will orient supervisors to the guidelines of the AmeriCorps VISTA program and the process of member. We will also discuss outcome measurement for the project year, on-site orientation ideas and other topics that will help your organization have a successful partnership with the MCNW VISTA program.

**By accepting a VISTA member you and your organization also accept a certain degree of oversight from MCNW and CNCS related to the VISTA project.** CNCS regulations, which MCNW is required to enforce, supersede any of your organization. A VISTA is not a staff member. They are national service members who are placed at your organization. Though they report to your organization and MCNW they are bound by CNCS policies and are truly managed by CNCS. Host sites are expected to make accommodations to such an affect (see "Restrictions" on pp. 3 for more information).

## **PROGRAMMATIC EXPECTATIONS**

VISTA efforts serve only low income persons. Working in a low income community alone is not sufficient. For example, even if a VISTA is placed at a school that serves free or reduced meals to 85% of its students the VISTA may only serve those 85% of students who are receiving free or reduced meals. Host sites must develop ways for members to exclusively serve low income persons.

Host sites are expected to be able to report on data required by CNCS, some of which you may not currently collect. If not in place, host sites must implement measures to report on such data.

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# How to Apply

## SUBMISSION PROCEDURES

Sites new to the MCNW VISTA Program are strongly encouraged to discuss their project with the VISTA Supervisor at MCNW prior to beginning a full application.

Applications must be typed using the templates provided. The VAD, position description, supervisor resume, and narrative responses as separate .doc or .docx files. Other file formats will not be reviewed. Attach other documents requiring a signature, including the Board Letter and Prohibited Activities form as separate scanned files in .jpg or .pdf format. Program narratives **must not exceed 10 pages**, excluding appendices. Applicants must include the following in addition to the narrative:

- Signed Acknowledgement of Prohibited AmeriCorps VISTA Activities—see attached.
- Narrative section responding to questions (below)
- The resume of whichever staff member will act as supervisor for the VISTA.
- A letter from your organization's board that supports the application for a VISTA and the related expenditures.
- VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)—see attached template and style guide.
- VISTA Position Description—see attached template and style guide.

Submit the VAD, position description, supervisor resume, and narrative responses as separate .doc or .docx files. Other file formats will not be reviewed. Attach other documents requiring a signature, including the Board Letter and Prohibited Activities form as separate scanned files in .jpg or .pdf format. **Faxes will not be accepted.**

Applications will be accepted and approved on a rolling basis. Sites are encouraged to apply early.

Applications must be received via email by **5:00 PM on Monday April 15, 2019**. Sites are encouraged to submit well before this date in order to allow for the widest recruitment window. Often, the VADs and proposals must undergo three or more complete revisions prior to approval.

**Application packets should be emailed to Olivia Rasmussen: [orasmussen@mercycorps.org](mailto:orasmussen@mercycorps.org)**

## AN IMPORTANT NOTE

The award of all VISTA resources as well as the approval of all VISTA sites and final project applications is subject to the availability of Fiscal Year 2019 Federal Appropriations and approval by the Corporation for National and Community Service.

By responding to this RFP with an application your organization acknowledges and consents to all provisions herein, and should you be awarded a VISTA member your organization agrees to be bound such provisions and all others detailed in the AmeriCorps VISTA handbook, AmeriCorps VISTA program guidance, and all guidance provided by CNCS and the federal government relevant to the AmeriCorps VISTA program.

**APPROXIMATE TIMELINE**

March 1	<b>RFP Opened.</b> Please contact Olivia Rasmussen, MCNW VISTA Program Supervisor, to review your project idea and for technical assistance with the application PRIOR to applying.
April 1	<b>Priority Consideration Deadline for Proposals.</b> MCNW will begin receiving, reviewing, and approving proposals after this date. Applying by this date will provide you with the greatest chance of your proposal being accepted and sponsored.
April 15	<b>Host Site Proposals due to MCNW.</b> Electronic copies of proposals must be sent via email to Olivia Rasmussen not later than 5:00 PM on 4/15/19. Sites are strongly encouraged to submit earlier in order to provide the widest recruitment window.
Submission thru May 10	<b>Requests for revisions, proposal negotiation, and approval.</b> MCNW will make decisions on which sites they will sponsor no later than this date.
Mid May-Mid July	<b>VISTA Volunteer Recruitment Period.</b> Applicants apply through the national CNCS portal to VISTA positions. Potential candidates are screened by MCNW and top-tier candidates are forwarded to the sites. Sites then interview and recommend a VISTA candidate for service and MCNW conducts a final screening interview. The Oregon CNCS office has final approval of VISTA volunteer candidates.
Jul 22	<b>Deadline for Recruitment.</b> Finalists must be selected and approved by MCNW. CNCS will then make the final decision about whether or not to advance the member.
Jul 25	<b>Supervisor Orientation &amp; Training.</b> Site supervisors are required to attend this training. We will discuss reporting requirements, project and VISTA volunteer management, as well as Onsite Orientation.
August 19	<b>First Day of Service.</b> Members arrive on site and complete a Pre-Service Orientation for Members. It is conducted by CNCS and is <b>required</b> for all members.
September 10-12	<b>In-Service Training for VISTA Members.</b> This is a three day training conducted by MCNW. All members are required to attend.

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## How We Evaluate Proposals

We receive many excellent proposals every cycle. Unfortunately, we cannot always sponsor every applicant site. If your site is not approved we will endeavor to provide you with feedback so that you may revise your application for later cycles or, if appropriate, refer you to another AmeriCorps or VISTA sponsoring agency for consideration. We select our priorities and evaluation criteria not based on perceived importance but by relevance to our organizational priorities and competencies. We value all work being undertaken in our communities.

We review proposals based on the following:

- Alignment with our core competencies and anti-poverty interventions in the community.
- Alignment with our target population groups.
- Alignment with VISTA's anti-poverty mission.
- Clarity and completeness of project proposal.
- Potential for member recruitment and retention.
- Level of organizational capacity and support.

We also consider factors such as an agency's past engagement with national service programs, the level of innovation evident in their project proposal, and the geographic scope of the organization.

On the next page you will find a list of population groups and interventions organized by tier, with tier one populations and interventions being the greatest priority for our VISTA program. The more closely a proposal reflects higher tier populations and groups the more likely it is to be approved.

### OUR TARGET POPULATION GROUPS

The VISTA program reflects our core competencies and work in the community. Tier one groups are groups that we feel best reflect our organizational mission and the purpose laid out for us by our funders at CNCS. Tier two groups are groups that we have worked with in some capacity or groups that are served by proxy through our tier one groups.

### OUR TARGET INTERVENTIONS

Akin to our methodology for determining our target populations, our anti-poverty interventions reflect our core competencies or our areas of vested expansion. Tier one interventions are those which mirror our current work in the community. Tier two interventions are those which share commonalities with our current work either in general methodology (such as asset development by means of individual development accounts) or have been identified as a

means of securing a need of one of our tier one or two population target groups (such as housing navigation services for low-income individuals & families experiencing homelessness or housing instability).

Organization Tier One Population Target Groups:

- Low-income communities including women and communities of color
- Low-income Native Americans, Native Alaskans & Pacific Islanders
- Low-income immigrants and refugees
- Low-income individuals & families facing homelessness

Organization Tier Two Population Target Groups:

- Low-income rural communities
- Low-income opportunity youth
- Low-income urban communities
- Low-income formerly incarcerated adults
- Low-income formerly incarcerated youth

Program Tier One Anti-Poverty Interventions:

- Individual Development Accounts for business ownership
- Community investment opportunities
- Financial literacy training
- Microenterprise training, lending, or mentorship
- Career readiness or apprenticeship programs

Program Tier Two Anti-Poverty Interventions:

- Prison re-entry services
- Individual Development Accounts for education
- Housing navigation and support services

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# Application Materials

All MCNW VISTA Host Site Applications should use the application format below to submit their project proposal. **Incomplete applications will not be considered.** Applicants must demonstrate that the proposed project:

- Helps people out of poverty and creates sustainable change.
- Includes outcome-based reporting that measures the impact of the project on those being served.
- **Communities served must be explicitly and exclusively low-income in character.**

## VISTA ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTION (VAD)

The VAD serves as the work plan and guide for the VISTA member. Complete this section using the VISTA Assignment Description (VAD) template (**attached**) and follow the guidance provided in the VAD and Position Description Style Guide (**attached**). Proposals that do not adhere to the VAD and Position Description Style Guide will not be considered. Submit in .doc or .docx format.

## POSITION DESCRIPTION

The position description serves to briefly explain the position, your organization, and the qualifications desired. Complete this section using the position description template (**attached**) and follow guidance provided in the VAD and Position Description Style Guide (**attached**). Proposals that do not adhere to the VAD and Position Description Style Guide will not be considered. Submit in .doc or .docx format.

## NARRATIVE

The narrative addresses the questions below. Limit is 10 pages total. Submit in .doc or .docx format.

## BOARD LETTER

The board letter must indicate that the board supports the VISTA project, the VISTA's placement at the organization, the related expenditures (including staff time), and that the organization must adhere to guidance provided by MCNW and CNCS in regards to the VISTA project. If you are a

public entity and do not have a board please contact us to discuss alternatives to a board letter. Submit in .pdf or.jpg format.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF PROHIBITED AMERICORPS VISTA ACTIVITIES**

The supervisor must sign a MOU (**attached**) detailing prohibited activities. Submit in .pdf or.jpg format.

## **ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS**

The following must be submitted in .pdf format.

- Copy of your organization's most recent 990.
- Copy of the proposed supervisor's resume.

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# MCNW VISTA Program Proposal Cover Page

Organization:

EIN #:

Site Supervisor:

Title/Department:

Physical Address

Mailing Address:

Phone/E-mail:

## CHECKLIST

The following must be completed and submitted with your application:

- VISTA assignment description (VAD).
- Narrative responses.
- Cover page (this document).
- VISTA position description.
- Signed acknowledgement of prohibited VISTA activities.
- The resume of whichever staff member will act as supervisor for the VISTA.
- A letter from your organization's board that supports the application for a VISTA. If you are a public entity and do not have a board please contact MCNW to discuss alternatives to a board letter.
- Copy of your organization's most recent 990.

## NARRATIVE

- 1) Provide an Executive Summary of your project (not to exceed 4 sentences).
- 2) State in measurable and quantifiable terms the specific poverty-related need(s) the VISTA project will address, including the number of low-income people directly affected by the problem(s). Use current and local statistical data, citing the source wherever possible, to substantiate the problem.
- 3) How have you identified the specific need in the community for this VISTA member project? How has the community participated in assessing the need for the project?
- 4) Explain which of the outcomes (economic opportunity) you plan to pursue. Name at least three related specific, measurable results of your project and explain how they help reduce poverty.
- 5) Provide a succinct timeline/overview, with dates by which you will achieve your project goals. Specify in which quarter the goals will be met.
- 6) Describe your organizational capacity (including number of staff and FTE equivalents), detail your standard work schedule, and indicate whether or not you have an HR department and basic administrative procedures and policies documented in the form of an HR or employee manual. If you are an organization of 3.0 FTE or fewer, explain how you will provide adequate oversight to the member and ensure that he or she is generally accompanied by staff at the office during service hours.
- 7) Who will be the VISTA member member's daily supervisor? If applicable, are there other staff who will work closely with the VISTA on a regular basis? Briefly describe the supervisor's managerial experience and roles of other staff in supporting the VISTA.
- 8) Describe how the daily supervisor will devote at least five hours per week to supporting the VISTA member in his/her efforts. What activities will they work on together?
- 9) Describe how your organization's plans to budget for the cost of the VISTA member.
- 10) Describe the member's work site. What are your plans for providing the VISTA member with a work space and equipment? (e.g. computer, telephone, fax, copier, etc.)

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- 11) Describe, with specific strategies, how you will recruit a qualified VISTA member to serve on this project. What challenges do you anticipate in recruiting qualified members? (Placement sites will receive some assistance from MCNW but will be ultimately responsible for recruiting a member to serve at their organization).
- 12) What is your transportation reimbursement plan for service-related activities? Is your organization prepared to compensate the VISTA member for travel incurred due to service-related activities in the form of a bus pass or reimbursement for mileage incurred on personal vehicles, access to company vehicles, etc.?
- 13) Describe current activities that your organization, other organizations in your field, and other organizations with which you partner, are undertaking to address the problem(s) identified in your need statement. How will the proposed project complement this work?
- 14) Briefly describe plans for orienting the member to your organization and the community. Describe any training opportunities and technical assistance that will be available to the member throughout the service year.
- 15) Host sites are expected to be able to report on data required by CNCS, some of which you may not currently collect. Are you able to make such provisions? How will you implement such provisions to collect the needed data?
- 16) VISTA projects may **only** serve low-income persons. Working in a low income community is not sufficient. For example, even if a VISTA is placed at a school that serves free or reduced meals to 85% of its students the VISTA may only serve those 85% of students who are receiving free or reduced meals. Host sites must develop ways for members to exclusively serve low income persons. What specific measures will your organization implement to be sure that VISTA members are only serving low income persons?
- 17) How will you ensure the sustainability of the work accomplished by the VISTA member once the VISTA member's term of service is completed? (This should be reflected also in the VAD, i.e., VISTA will create policies and procedures manual for future staff to use.)
- 18) CNCS checks its records to see if your organization has hosted a VISTA at any point in the past and, if your organization has, what the VISTA undertook, if the project was successful, and the quality of the member's experience. If you have hosted a VISTA before, what did they do? Was the member successful? How was your experience?
- 19) If your site is an existing VISTA site seeking renewal, how will this project build on the previous year's VISTA project? How will the project be sustainable beyond the VISTA

year? If you are a site in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of renewal, what specific goals are you implementing for project sustainability?