



MERCY CORPS NORTHWEST VISTA PROGRAM

Request for Proposals



2020-2021

MISSION

The Mercy Corps Northwest VISTA Program is a project of Mercy Corps Northwest and AmeriCorps VISTA. Our goal is to empower individuals, organizations, and communities to realize their potential and break intergenerational cycles of poverty for good. We partner with community-based organizations to develop and implement capacity building VISTA projects focused on expanding economic opportunity and community resilience in Oregon. Our guiding mission is: *to invest in communities, uncover breakthrough solutions, and fight for equitable opportunities across the Pacific Northwest.*

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Overview of Opportunity

The Mercy Corps Northwest VISTA Program aims to empower individuals, organizations, and communities to realize their full potential while expanding economic opportunity and community resiliency in Oregon, breaking intergenerational cycles of poverty for good. We partner with community-based organizations and local government agencies to develop capacity building projects, then engage new nonprofit and public service professionals in a year of full-time national service to implement the capacity building project. Our AmeriCorps VISTA Program aims to reduce poverty in our community through building sustainable economic development and community resiliency initiatives to improve economic equity and increase the reach, efficiency, and effectiveness of nonprofit and local government programs.

This Request for Proposals is open to all nonprofit, local government, and tribal government agencies in the State of Oregon who have a capacity building need at their agency and would like to host an AmeriCorps VISTA member at their site to implement this project. Agencies hosting a VISTA member may be awarded VISTA resources to complete the project for up to 3 years, but must reapply annually—getting approval to host a VISTA after year one is not guaranteed and is based on several factors. More details on eligibility and requirements to host a VISTA can be found on p. 7 below.

Please contact us as soon as possible by email and/or phone with your intent to apply!

We want to work with all agencies who intend to apply on their application together before submitting it for final approval to the CNCS, the Federal agency that oversees the AmeriCorps VISTA Program. We offer rolling notification of provisional approval by Mercy Corps Northwest and CNCS. Mercy Corps Northwest helps revise and submit applications to CNCS on a **rolling basis** as they arrive from applicants. We strongly encourage early applications for best chances of receiving approval for your project.

The award of all VISTA resources as well as the approval of all VISTA host sites and projects is subject to the availability of funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service and approval of Federal Appropriations.

The application will include:

1. Completed Cover Page and VISTA Project Narrative submitted using the fillable PDF attached
2. Completed Draft VISTA Assignment Description (VAD) submitted as a Word document
3. Complete Draft Position Description submitted as a Word document
4. Additional documents including board letter of support, site supervisor resume, copy of the organization's most recent 990, and signed prohibited activities document submitted in .pdf or .jpeg format

More directions on the above materials can be found on p. 15 below.

Please direct all application questions and materials to:

Olivia Rasmussen, VISTA Program Supervisor

Email: orasmussen@mercy Corps.org / Phone: 503-896-5094

Organization and Program Overview

ABOUT MERCY CORPS NORTHWEST

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 community resilience services. MCNW works with nonprofits and local governments to select and place MCNW VISTA members throughout Oregon.

ABOUT MERCY CORPS NORTHWEST VISTA PROGRAM

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, affordable housing, and disaster preparedness. Though our projects target historically underrepresented groups, MCNW VISTA Program initiatives serve all Oregonians by empowering dynamic communities to be collaborative, bold, and action-oriented.

ABOUT 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 (or, "VISTA") 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, asset development & microenterprise, and other projects related to developing economic opportunities community resilience for low income communities. With passion, commitment, and innovation, sites can partner with MCNW and VISTA to create or expand programs designed to bring individuals and communities out of poverty.

ABOUT AMERICORPS VISTA MEMBERS

VISTA members must be 18 years and older, there are no minimum educational requirements to participate. Please note that MCNW and host sites can set their own age and education requirements, but are encouraged to put as few restrictions as possible to improve recruitment outcomes. In the past, MCNW VISTA members have had a wide range of education levels and ages, but are typically between ages 21-30 with bachelor's level education.

VISTA member selection process

VISTA members are recruited on a rolling basis during the recruitment window, which is typically open 2.5 months. MCNW provides primary recruitment and applicant vetting. Host sites select candidates to interview, participate in all interviews and suggest finalist for selection. MCNW will make a formal offer and CNCS officially hires the member. MCNW coordinates onboarding and relocation with CNCS.

What the MCNW VISTA Program Does

GOALS AND OUTCOMES

Our program aims to empower individuals, organizations, and communities to realize their full potential while expanding economic opportunity and community resiliency in the Oregon, breaking intergenerational cycles of poverty for good. Contingent on congressional funding, we will work with host sites to develop and implement 10 AmeriCorps VISTA projects for the March 2020-2021 service year, placing members throughout Oregon to fight for economic equity and alleviate poverty. **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 VISTA 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 Program Supervisor and VISTA Leader based in the Mercy Corps Northwest VISTA Program.

The VISTA Leader and Program Supervisor provide support for sites and VISTA members by leading VISTA recruitment, coordinating training programs for members and supervisors, monitoring outcomes and quality of work, liaising between the host 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 AmeriCorps 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 OF SERVICE

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 paid directly by the Federal Government for their service. Beyond this living allowance, VISTA members receive many other benefits for their service, which are detailed below:

- The yearly living allowance of:
 - **\$14,665.70/year** in the Portland Metro delivered in biweekly installments of \$562.52.
 - **\$12,490.30/year** in all other Oregon counties delivered in biweekly installments of \$479.08.

***All amounts are pre-tax (Federal taxes are withheld, state taxes are not) and are paid to members by direct deposit every 14 days.*
- The living allowance can be supplemented with part-time, legal, outside work so long as it does not interfere with VISTA.
- Health benefits:

- Members receive a \$7,900 health allowance **or** a health benefit plan, if they are federally exempt.
- Under the health allowance members must secure their own coverage (typically Medicaid) and can use the \$7,900 to offset co-pays or other approved expenses. The healthcare allowance cannot be applied to insurance premiums, costs for non-essential health benefits (such as elective or cosmetic services), costs associated with going outside of your PPO (primary network), and costs associated with the care of your spouse and/or dependents.
- If they are federally exempt, they may be eligible for a health benefit package. This is not technically health insurance but will cover most injuries or illnesses at a low cost.
- VISTAs have the choice of end of service stipend (\$1,800) **or** education award (\$6,095).
- Members can receive relocation assistance (if moving more than 50 miles to serve) consisting of:
 - A \$750 settling in allowance delivered about 6-8 weeks after the first day of service.
 - Mileage expenses at \$00.40/mile from their home of record to their site about 6-8 weeks after the first day of service.
- Members receive a \$300 professional development stipend to use towards any opportunities (classes, conferences, trainings, etc.) that support them in implementing their VISTA project.
- Members can receive childcare assistance (if eligible).
- Members are eligible for forbearance or deferment on student loans and VISTA service may be counted towards the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program if members remain in repayment during service.
- Members receive 10 days of personal leave, 10 days of medical leave, and most major holidays. They may also receive additional emergency leave in the event of a serious injury or family emergency.

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.

Your organization may have to make accommodations in order for a VISTA and their 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.**

Host Site Eligibility and Requirements

HOST SITE AND PROJECT FOCUS

MCNW VISTA host 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.
- **Disaster Services:** projects focus on disaster preparedness, mitigation, or response planning.

REQUIREMENTS OVERVIEW

MCNW VISTA Host Sites are required to meet the following criteria:

- Provide materials & equipment to the VISTA member to carry out their service
 - Brick & mortar office location
 - Personal work computer
 - Desk space & chair (not located at front desk)
 - High speed internet access
 - Personal email, phone, and phone number
- Provide mileage reimbursement for work-related travel conducted by VISTA member
- Provide low-income annual transit pass for VISTAs serving in metro areas
- At least 1.0 FTE of staff at organization (prefer 3.0 FTE or more)
- Provide cost share payment to Mercy Corps Northwest for VISTA member between \$7,500-\$9,000, billed in two installments
- Host site supervisor's transportation costs associated with attending MCNW Site Supervisor Training

A more detailed explanation of each requirement is below.

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 their 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 their 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 \$7,500 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 \$15,000-\$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 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.

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 p. 5 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.

How to Apply

SUBMISSION PROCEDURES

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

The application cover page and project narrative responses must be typed using the PDF application provided. If you are unable to complete the application in the PDF form provided, please request a Word .doc version from the VISTA Program Supervisor. The VAD and Position Description must be submitted as separate .doc or .docx files that are editable. Other file formats will not be reviewed. Attach all 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. Applicants must submit the following materials when applying to host a VISTA member:

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

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

Applications are due via email by **5:00 PM on Friday, October 18th**. Late applications and materials will not be accepted. 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,
VISTA Program Supervisor: orasmussen@mercy corps.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

September 1	RFP Opened. Please contact Olivia Rasmussen, MCNW VISTA Program Supervisor, to review your project idea and for technical assistance with the application PRIOR to applying.
October 1	Priority Consideration Deadline for Proposals. MCNW will begin 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.
October 18	Host Site Proposals due to MCNW. Electronic copies of proposals must be sent via email to Olivia Rasmussen no later than 5:00 PM. Sites are strongly encouraged to submit earlier in order to provide the widest recruitment window.
October 18- November 15	Requests for revisions, proposal negotiation, and approval. MCNW will make decisions on which sites they will sponsor no later than this date.
November 20, 10-11:30 am	VISTA Recruitment Webinar. Attendance required for all new site supervisors; attendance <i>strongly</i> encouraged for continuing supervisors. We will review recruitment process, tips, and timeline.
December 2- February 7	VISTA Volunteer Recruitment Period. 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 finalist candidate for service and MCNW conducts a final screening interview. The Oregon CNCS office has final approval of VISTA volunteer candidates.
February 7	Deadline for Recruitment. Finalists must be selected and approved by MCNW. CNCS will then make the final decision about whether or not to advance the member.
February 20	Supervisor Orientation & Training. New site supervisors are required to attend this training. We will discuss reporting requirements, project and VISTA volunteer management, as well as Onsite Orientation.
February 24	Approval & selection deadline for CNCS. Candidates must be fully approved and selected for service by CNCS by this date.
March 16	First Day of Service. Members arrive on site and complete a Pre-Service Orientation for Members. It is conducted by CNCS and is required for all members.
March 24- 26	In-Service Training for VISTA Members. This is a three day training conducted by MCNW. All members are required to attend.

How Proposals Are Evaluated

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.

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.**

We review proposals based on the following:

- Alignment with MCNW core competencies and anti-poverty interventions in the community
- Alignment with our target population groups (outlined below)
- 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
- Low-income formerly incarcerated adults
- Low-income formerly incarcerated youth

Organization Tier Two Population Target Groups:

- Low-income rural communities
- Low-income opportunity youth
- Low-income urban communities

Program Tier One Anti-Poverty Interventions:

- Individual Development Accounts for business ownership
- Community investment and alternative financing opportunities
- Financial literacy training
- Microenterprise training, lending, or mentorship
- Career readiness or apprenticeship programs
- Prison re-entry services

Program Tier Two Anti-Poverty Interventions:

- Individual Development Accounts for education
- Housing navigation and support services

Application Materials

All applications must include a completed Cover Page and Project Narrative PDF as well as all other application materials listed below. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

Please include all the following materials in your application:

COVER PAGE AND PROJECT NARRATIVE

The narrative consists of 20 questions that are to be answered in the PDF document (**attached**). Please try to limit your responses to the space provided in the document. Submit using the fillable PDF provided and submit in .pdf format. If you do not have access to technology that supports completion in this format, please request a Word .doc version from the VISTA Program Supervisor.

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 Style Guide (**attached**). Proposals must adhere to the VAD Style Guide to 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 Position Description Style Guide (**attached**). Proposals must adhere to the Position Description Style Guide to be considered. 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. Submit in .pdf or .jpg format.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF PROHIBITED AMERICORPS VISTA ACTIVITIES

The supervisor must review and sign the attached VISTA Prohibited Activities document. Submit in .pdf or .jpg format.

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS

The following additional documents must be submitted in .pdf format:

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