Project Proposal and Application Instructions

Grant project period | May 2021 – May 2022

Submission Dates

Intent to apply: Friday, December 4, 2020

Submit an email to Charlotte.Brown@memphistn.gov
with your intent to submit a project proposal.

Proposal Deadline: Wednesday, January 6, 2021

Contact information:

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Program Overview

The City of Memphis AmeriCorps VISTA projects all align with at least **one** of the Corporation for National and Community Service focus areas and objectives: **Education, Economic Opportunity, Veterans and Military Families, and Healthy Futures.**

AmeriCorps VISTA is the national service program designed specifically to help alleviate poverty. Founded as Volunteers in Service to America in 1965, VISTA has been working to address poverty in America for 50 years.

Members live and serve in some of our nation's poorest urban and rural areas. With passion, commitment, and hard work, they create or expand programs designed to bring individuals and communities out of poverty.

What is AmeriCorps*VISTA?

AmeriCorps VISTA is the national service program that works to eliminate poverty. The first VISTAs began serving in 1965 in the migrant farm worker camps in California, the hollows of eastern Kentucky, and the inner city of Hartford, CT. Since then, more than 180,000 VISTAs have served throughout America to expand the capacity of homegrown efforts to address community challenges.

VISTAs develop initiatives that enable people to become self-sufficient and secure. Our impact is reflected in the hundreds of programs that VISTAs helped launch over the decades, including Head Start, Upward Bound, the credit union system, Habitat for Humanity, and Neighborhood Watch.

Mission: VISTA works to provide long-term solutions to poverty. Members serve with nonprofit, faith-based, and community organizations to strengthen and develop programs that eliminate poverty.

Core Principles: Projects must be developed in accordance with AmeriCorps VISTA's core principles: an anti-poverty focus; community empowerment; sustainable solutions; and capacity building.

- **Anti-Poverty Focus** – The statutory purpose of AmeriCorps VISTA is to strengthen and support efforts to eliminate and alleviate poverty and address poverty-related problems in the United States. Each VISTA project must focus on empowering individuals to emerge from poverty, not simply making poverty more tolerable. VISTA projects should focus on long-term solutions rather than short-term services.

- **Community Empowerment** - Prospective and current AmeriCorps VISTA project sponsors must engage people of the communities to be served by the project in planning, developing, implementing, and evaluating the project. Each project must be responsive and relevant to the lives of community residents, and tap into inherent community assets, strengths, and resources.

- **Sustainable Solutions** - AmeriCorps VISTA members serve as short-term resources to build the long-term sustainability of anti-poverty programs. Projects should be developed with a goal to phase out the need for VISTAs and have the project continue without them.

- **Capacity Building** – VISTAs create systems that remain long after their term of service ends. VISTA projects expand the scale, impact, and resource-leveraging ability of programs and organizations that work to eliminate poverty. Our members strengthen sponsors by building infrastructure, expanding community partnerships, securing long-term resources, and more, as determined by local needs.

Who are AmeriCorps VISTA members?
VISTA members who serve with us come from across the region, state and country. They serve full time (40 hours per week) for one full year (365 days). Most are college graduates and some have advanced degrees. Experience levels range from a recent college grad to a retired professional. VISTA members are different ages, genders, races, cultures and come from different socioeconomic backgrounds, yet all of them share the dedication and commitment of giving something back to the community and the mission of "getting things done."

VISTA members are expected to live in the communities that they serve and they receive a bi-weekly living allowance of approximately $472.22 before taxes, which is 105% of the Federal Poverty Level. In addition to the living allowance, they also receive healthcare benefits, loan forbearance, and childcare (if eligible). Upon successful completion of their year of service, VISTA members can choose to receive either a cash stipend of $1,800 or an Education Award of $ $6,095. All VISTA's also receive ongoing training and development as well as the satisfaction of "getting things done" in their community.

What Can VISTA Members Do?
In determining whether VISTA is the right match for a given organization's needs, think about the kinds of activities members will be expected to perform. The role of the VISTA member is primarily to build the capacity and sustainability of the project and community, with a focus on reducing and alleviating poverty. **INDIRECT service is the focus of VISTA**.

Is VISTA Right for My Organization?
The following is a list of questions to think about before applying for an AmeriCorps*VISTA member:
- Is there a poverty related project my organization would like to start or expand? Are the project's goals to help move people and communities out of poverty?
- Does my organization have the infrastructure in place to support a VISTA member? (Think staff time for supervision, a work space with computer and phone access etc.)
- Has my organization utilized VISTA or AmeriCorps resources in the past? If so, how will this be different?
- Is anyone at the organization (staff or volunteer) currently involved in a project like the one I would like the VISTA member to work on? Please note that VISTA members cannot replace staff positions.
- How will we sustain the project after the VISTA member completes the year of service and how will we measure the project's impact?

Placement Site Eligibility Requirements
To host a VISTA an organization must be one of the following:
- Faith based or nonprofit organizations with a 501(c) designation
- School Districts & Educational Service Districts
- Government agencies: city, county, regional, state, tribal or federal

VISTA Program Requirements
Members must be placed in a capacity building role for the entire term of service.
- Activities cannot duplicate routine functions of or displace paid employees.
- 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.

- Placement sites must have a Drug Free Work Place Policy and a Non-Discrimination Policy.
- Placement sites must be able to effectively recruit, train, support and supervise the member(s).
- Placement Sites are eligible to have a VISTA member serve with their organization, in the same position, for up to three years.
- <u>Each year is meant to build on the previous year</u>:

    o Year 1 – member establishes and creates a program or project.
    o Year 2 – member continues to create program and begins to create structure for program to be sustainable.
    o Year 3 – member should focus mostly on making the program sustainable.

Share of Costs

Our program requires a cash match from each sponsoring organization for each VISTA member awarded. The cash match is used to pay for sponsored trainings and travel, and to administer the program. The **cash match for organizations that are entering their first, second, or third year utilizing VISTA resources is:**

Year 1 Programs - $3,500 | Year 2 Programs - $5,500 | Year 3 Programs - $7,500

Additional Costs to Consider

Each project has different budgetary needs. Some projects will have more travel required where another will need more funding for training. Planning a budget before applying to be a VISTA host site can eliminate potential problems in the future. Please plan for the following expenses:

- Recruitment costs (advertising, printing, interview time, etc.)
- VISTA on-site supervisor time
- Project related training for VISTA
- Mileage reimbursement for project related travel
- Office supplies and equipment (computer, paper, software, desk, etc.)
- Postage, telephone and long distance
- Additional project related expenses (web-hosting, publishing materials, professional dues, etc.)

Placement Site Responsibilities

Our program feels that the following requirements enable both VISTA's and sponsors to maximize the benefits of a one-year placement.

Supervision and Mentoring
- Provide the VISTA with an immediate and available supervisor for the full term of service that is able to meet with the VISTA for a minimum of one hour each week in addition to providing an on-site orientation and training for the member upon arrival at the site.
- Assist the VISTA in identifying opportunities to meet professional development goals through their service and support the VISTA's participation in our program's meetings and training.
- If your organization is accepted, the designated Site Supervisors will be required to attend one (1) of the <u>mandatory</u> AmeriCorps*VISTA Supervisor training dates that will take place in May of 2021.

Project Support
- Provide adequate office space, office equipment, tools and materials for the VISTA to perform service.
- Provide a comprehensive on-site orientation and dedicate at least $300 for training and development for each VISTA on site.
- Provide transportation or mileage reimbursement for VISTA members during established service hours in accordance with the policies of the placement site.
- Support VISTA participation in trainings led by our program, national service day activities, and other required activities.

Outreach
Conduct outreach within the sponsoring organization and the community to increase awareness of the service our program's VISTA members provide the community.

Risk Management
Establish safety guidelines and rules that ensure the well-being of the VISTA members and participants in the sponsoring organization's program.

Reporting
Complete progress reporting at least two times during the service year.
Participate in site visits with staff from our program.

There are two parts to the proposal submission.

1) Application narrative must be typed and not exceed 2,500 words.

2) VISTA Assignment Description (VAD) must be typed and not exceed two pages. There isn't a word count limit on the VAD.

APPLICATION SELECTION CRITERIA and INSTRUCTIONS

All applications must be typed and <mark>not exceed 2,500 words</mark>. VISTA placement sites will be determined through a competitive application process. Applications will be reviewed and ranked by a committee of community representatives. Emphasis will be placed on narratives written in alignment with AmeriCorps Principles.   Projects must be developed in accordance with AmeriCorps VISTA's core principles: an anti-poverty focus; community empowerment; sustainable solutions; and capacity building.

<mark>**Be clear and succinct**. Do not use jargon, boilerplate, rhetoric, or exaggeration. Describe clearly what you intend to do and how your project responds to the selection criteria.</mark>

APPLICATION NARRATIVES (*not to exceed 2,500 words*)

Community Need
- State the specific community and low-income population to be served.
- State the specific poverty-related need(s) the VISTA project will address. Connection to VISTA programming priorities (Education, Healthy Futures, Economic Opportunity, and/or Veterans & Families). Use current and local statistical data, citing the source whenever possible, to substantiate the problem.
- Statement as to why need is not currently met.

Program Sustainability
- State how many years you anticipate needing VISTA resources.
- Summarize how the proposed project will strengthen the community and bring individuals out of poverty.
- Address how you will ensure the proposed project and outcomes continue without VISTA resources.

Program Support
- Describe in specific terms how your organization will recruit qualified applicants to serve as VISTA members on this project.
- State if supervision will be a full-time or part-time responsibility. If your organization is accepted to our program, supervisors are required to attend VISTA Supervisor training on either April or June of 2020.
- What in-kind resources will you provide to ensure the success of the proposed project?
- Is your organization able to accommodate AmeriCorps VISTA members with disabilities?

Returning Projects Only
Current or past AmeriCorps VISTA sponsoring organizations seeking project renewal are required to complete this section.
- Briefly state your project's outcomes and accomplishments.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Each site must assist with identifying CNCS approved performance measures for their project.
  - Go to: https://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/national-performance-measure-instruments-americorps-vista
  - Identify criteria from both Capacity Building **and** Complimentary Program Measures

- Contact charlotte.brown@memphistn.gov for guidance on appropriate measures for your project.

VISTA ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTION (VAD)

Please complete a VAD <u>for each</u> VISTA position requested. Not to exceed 2-pages.
- Focus Area: Select either Education, Healthy Futures, Economic Opportunity, and/or Veterans & Family.
- Goal of the project: Make certain to include a poverty statement identifying the specific community and low-income population that will be served.
- Objective: Identify at least three objectives that align with the project goal. Include target dates for specified objective to be completed
- Member Activities: Outline the action steps required to accomplish the specified objective.
- Use the template provided with the application for drafting the project VISTA Assignment Description.

The VISTA Assignment Description (VAD):

- Is both a position description that should be used during the recruitment of your members and a work plan that should be used to assess their performance.
- Takes the milestones/performance measures you've identified in your project application and translates them into a realistic set of activities.
- Serves as a road map, a tool your members will use throughout their service term to achieve the overall goals of the project.
- Are written per year, per assignment. For example, a 3-year project will require 3 separate VADs.
- Do not have a set number of required Objectives or Member Activities.

Action Verbs to be used in Objective of the Assignment:

Analyze	Assess	Build	Collect	Communicate
Compile	Create	Develop	Engage in	Ensure
Establish	Evaluate	Generate	Identify	Implement
Launch	Market	Plan	Present	Promote
Recruit	Refine	Research	Secure	Update

Member Activities:

- Member activities should answer the questions: *How will that happen? How will the VISTA Member accomplish the objective?*
- What is the focus of VISTA activities for this site and this capacity goal during the proposed project year?
- Below are some examples of the types of service performed by a VISTA.

Indirect Service	Capacity Building	Sustainable Endeavors
Recruit volunteers	Develop forms, volunteer assignments, trainings	Development of Volunteer Policy and Procedure Handbook
Train direct service providers	Write training curriculum or manual; train trainers	Develop training manual and train the trainer curriculum
Coordinate projects	Develop procedures and systems	Develop volunteer management system and procedural guide
Public speaking	Develop speakers' bureau	Develop community partnerships
Write press releases	Develop press kits, media database	Secure media partners
Organize fundraising events	Grant writing; develop database	Secure project staffing and diverse revenue streams
Organize task forces/coalitions	Develop leadership structure of task force/coalition	Create infrastructure
Conduct outreach	Design brochures, posters	Create mechanism for project evaluation

Note: Adapted from *Step-By-Step: A Guide to Partnering with AmeriCorps*VISTA*