

Title: VISTA Request for Concept Papers Notice

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Topic: Request for Concept Papers

Summary: This letter requests concept papers from organizations interested in becoming an AmeriCorps VISTA project.

The contents of this document do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way.

This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies



## REQUEST FOR CONCEPT PAPERS (RFCP): Fiscal Year 2022 AmeriCorps VISTA State New Projects

### IMPORTANT DATES

Task	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3	Cycle 4
<b>Concept Papers Due Date</b>	November 3, 2021	January 26, 2022	March 23, 2022	June 1, 2022
<b>Concept Paper Decisions Target Date*</b>	December 2021	February 2022	April 2022	July 2022
<b>Application Award Target Date*</b>	January 2022	April 2022	May 2022	August 2022

### OVERVIEW OF AMERICORPS VISTA

Founded in 1965, Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) is a federal anti-poverty national service program designed to provide resources to nonprofit organizations and public agencies to address poverty and poverty-related problems in the United States. In 1993, VISTA was incorporated into the AmeriCorps network of national service programs, housed at AmeriCorps, formerly known as the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS).

Projects must be developed in accordance with four core principles: an anti-poverty focus; community empowerment; sustainable solutions; and capacity building. For a more in-depth description of our core principles, please review the [Fiscal Year \(FY\) 2022 Annual Program Guidance](#).

#### ANTI- POVERTY FOCUS

All AmeriCorps VISTA service activities must be designed to support one or more specific anti-poverty projects at a site. Applications must clearly define the anti-poverty initiative being created or enhanced.

#### COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

Prospective and current AmeriCorps VISTA project sponsors must engage people of the communities affected 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 must 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 efforts. VISTA projects make a lasting difference through the commitment, energy,

and initiative that AmeriCorps VISTA members bring to the community. Projects must be developed with a goal to phase out the need for AmeriCorps VISTA members and have project activities continue without VISTA resources.

### **CAPACITY BUILDING**

AmeriCorps VISTA members create systems that remain long after their term of service ends. VISTA projects expand the scale, impact, and resource-leveraging ability of specific anti-poverty initiatives. AmeriCorps VISTA members must focus on building the capacity of specific anti-poverty programs and interventions and not on general capacity building for the sponsor or its sites.

### **OVERVIEW OF AMERICORPS VISTA PROJECTS**

An AmeriCorps VISTA project refers to a set of activities, as set forth in a project application, for which a federal award of VISTA resources is made. An AmeriCorps VISTA project is operated and overseen by, and the responsibility of, a sponsor. The duration of projects varies, but typically lasts for three to four years. Project activities are carried out by AmeriCorps VISTA members placed at project sites.

### **PROGRAMMING PRIORITIES/ PRIORITY POPULATIONS**

- Economic Opportunity: Housing, Employment/Workforce Development, and Federal Benefit Access
- Education: School Readiness and Learning Loss, K-12 Success, Career and Technical Evaluation (CTE), College Access and Success, and STEM, including remote learning in all areas
- Healthy Futures: Food Security and Access to Health Care particularly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and opioid crisis, to include mental health services
- Veterans and Military Families: Economic Opportunity, Education, and Healthy Futures
- Environmental Stewardship: Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency, Building Community Resilience, and Conservation and Habitat Preservation
- Priority Populations: Rural Communities, Indian Country, and areas of deep poverty.
- Additional Priority Consideration: Projects that work in the above areas and populations that address issues of racial equity.

### **VISTA MEMBER BENEFITS AND LOGISTICS**

AmeriCorps VISTA members serve at sponsoring organizations for approximately 40 hours per week and address issues that have been locally identified as community priorities. The project goals and activities are designed to build the sponsor's capacity to serve low-income communities. AmeriCorps provides a modest living allowance depending on the county in which the VISTA member serves, health benefits, and childcare benefits (if eligible). Members also receive either the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award or an end-of-service cash stipend upon successful completion of their full year of service.

### **SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS ELIGIBILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY**

Nonprofit organizations, Native American Tribes, and state and local government agencies are eligible to apply to be AmeriCorps VISTA sponsors. With regard to nonprofit organizations, sponsorship is not limited to those designated by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) specifically as 501(c)(3). Nonprofits with other IRS-designated 501(c) statuses that focus on anti-poverty outcomes are eligible to apply. Organizations that focus solely on advocacy or lobbying are not eligible. Sponsoring organizations may be local, statewide, or national and must be able to manage the project, recruit, supervise, and provide logistical support (e.g. supplies and materials, on-the-job training, mileage reimbursement or other transportation support) to the

AmeriCorps VISTA members. An AmeriCorps VISTA project may be continued on a year to year basis based upon available resources, performance, and AmeriCorps priorities.

## **GUIDANCE AND INSTRUCTIONS**

This notice should be read together with the FY2022 AmeriCorps VISTA Program Guidance, AmeriCorps VISTA Concept Paper Instructions, AmeriCorps VISTA Project Application Instructions, AmeriCorps VISTA Standard Budget Instructions, and AmeriCorps VISTA Regulations (45CFR2556). These documents are available online at [www.americorps.gov/vistarfcfp](http://www.americorps.gov/vistarfcfp).

## **OTHER INFORMATION**

### **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

AmeriCorps will host Request For Concept Paper Webinars to answer questions about the opportunity and eGrants. AmeriCorps strongly encourages applicants to participate in these sessions. The schedule and call-in information for the webinars is on the AmeriCorps website: [www.americorps.gov/vistarfcfp](http://www.americorps.gov/vistarfcfp).

Please note that local AmeriCorps Regional Offices may conduct additional webinars. To email staff handling programming in your state, email the two-letter state abbreviation followed by @cns.gov (e.g., [MD@cns.gov](mailto:MD@cns.gov) or [CA@cns.gov](mailto:CA@cns.gov)).

For technical questions and problems with the eGrants system, call the AmeriCorps Hotline at (800)942-2677. AmeriCorps Hotline hours are Monday through Friday, 9:00a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Eastern Time. Potential applicants can also use this link: [eGrants Questions](#). Be prepared to provide the application ID, organization's name, and the name of the Notice to which the organization is applying.

### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

- [General Information about AmeriCorps VISTA](#)
- [Sponsoring a VISTA Project](#)
- [Create and Manage an eGrants Account](#)