AmeriCorps VISTA

Request for Concept Papers

November 7, 2024

This webinar is produced and published at US taxpayer expense.

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Session Outcomes

- Describe what AmeriCorps VISTA is and identify what members can and can't do for your organization.
- Learn how to apply and connect with AmeriCorps staff and resources.
- Review the Concept Paper submission process.

What is AmeriCorps VISTA?

Fighting Poverty

Empowering Low- Income Communities

Building Capacity for Communities and Organizations

Creating Sustainable Solutions

Key Terms

VISTA Project

AmeriCorps Regional Office

Project Sponsor

Member

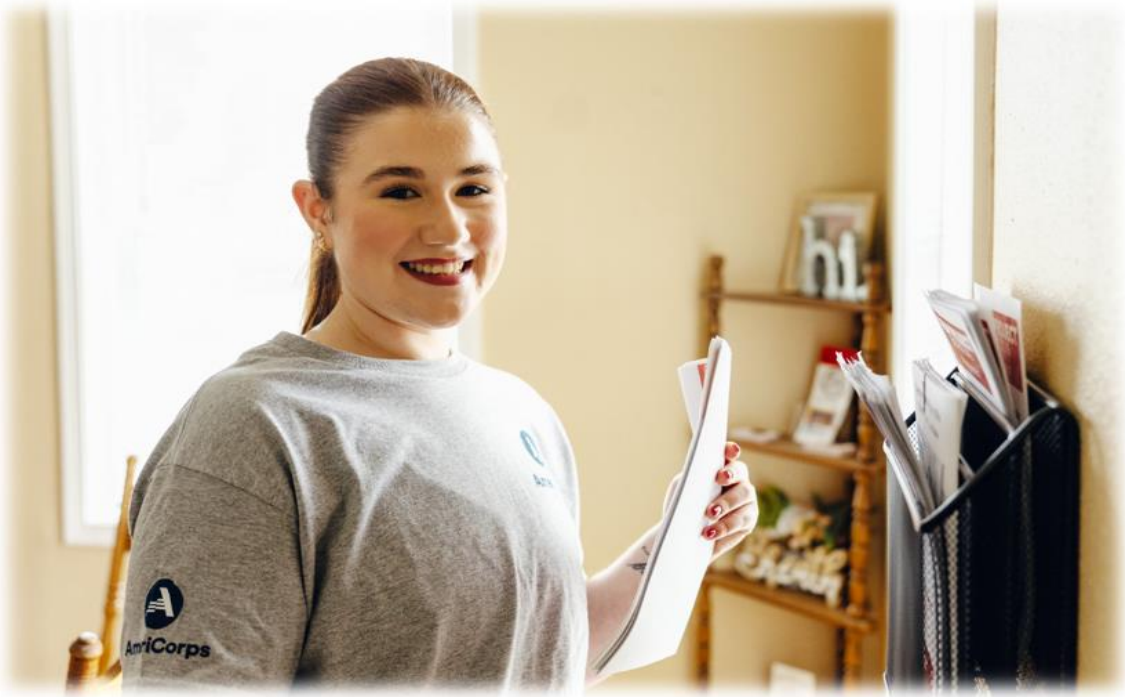
Project Director

Leader

Supervisor

Summer Associate

2023 AmeriCorps VISTA Impact



2.1M+ youth receiving services

60K+ individuals supported in substance abuse programming

Align9

This project utilizes 6 members to increase the capacity of rural and small-town communities in eastern Tennessee and in the Louisville, Kentucky, area to fight the opioid crisis.

- 4 members in TN and 2 members in KY develop community partnerships, design marketing and communications materials, build volunteer systems, conduct outreach, and improve data tracking and analysis systems.
- In FY24, members generated $16,500 in cash resources and $17,500 in in-kind resources and engaged 20 volunteers in 1,200 hours of service.

Idaho Department of Correction

This project utilizes approximately 12 members to increase the capacity of the Idaho Department of Corrections mentoring program that serve incarcerated individuals who are experiencing high recidivism rates. The program has an emphasis on economic opportunity. In the past year, members have:

- Increased the number of volunteer mentors statewide from 380 to over 1000.
- Connected over 500 mentor and mentee relationships.
- Recruited and managed 1000 volunteers.
- Developed partnerships, tracking systems, educational opportunities and more.

AmeriCorps VISTA Project Sponsors

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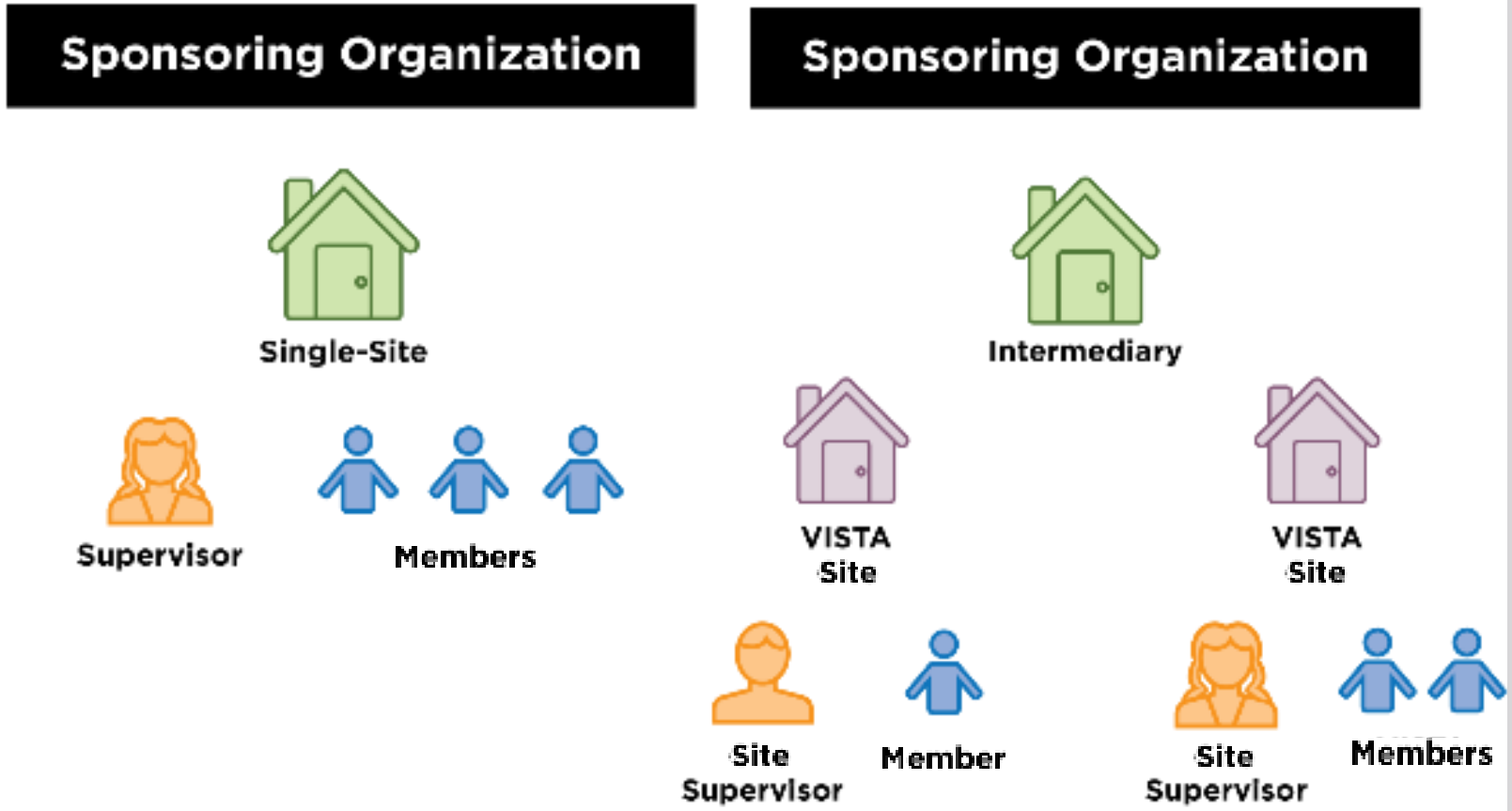
Eligible Entities

- The following types of entities are eligible to apply to be an AmeriCorps VISTA sponsor and thereby undertake projects in the U.S. and certain U.S. territories: (per 45 CFR § 2556.100):
  - Public or private nonprofit organizations
  - Tribal government or tribal government agencies
  - State and local government or agencies

VISTA Project Models



Single Site Model

- Supervisor
- Member(s)

Intermediary Model

- Sites can be located in the same state and may include sites in another state(s)
- Site supervisors
- AmeriCorps Members(s) serving in the VISTA program

Capacity Building

vs

Direct Service

Capacity Building

Tasks and activities to expand the scale, reach, efficiency or effectiveness of specific antipoverty projects

Direct Service

Providing services to the identified project recipients or clients of a project

Sponsor Responsibilities: Member Management

- Recruit and place members
- Provide workspace, equipment and supplies
- Professional development and on-site orientation & training
- Assist members with community entry
- Member supervision and performance appraisals
- Sponsor Verification Form

AmeriCorps Members serving in the VISTA Program

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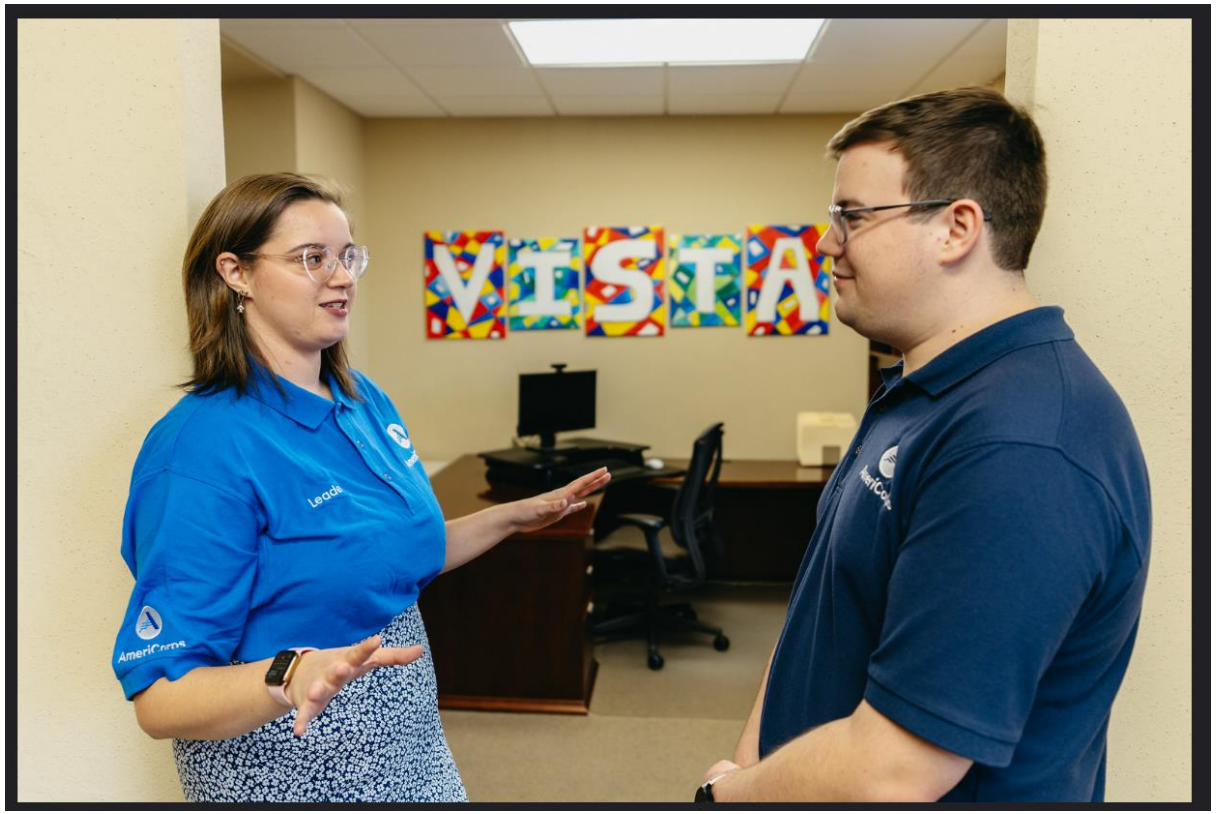
The Basics

- 18+ years of age
- U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents
- Must pass a national service criminal history check
- May have specific knowledge skills, or abilities required by the sponsoring organization
- Local or national recruits

Leaders



- Projects with six or more members may have a Leader assigned to support the members
- Leaders guide data collection & interpret data (they do not perform the reporting)
- Coordinate, facilitate, and support the efforts of members (do not supervise)

What do AmeriCorps Members serving in a VISTA project do?

Create Powerful Partnerships with businesses, community leaders, and other stakeholders

Expand current programs in demographic, geographic, and/or programmatic scope

Build volunteer management, leadership and training systems

Leverage both cash and in-kind resources by building development systems

What can AmeriCorps Members serving in VISTA NOT Do?

- International Work
- Religious Activity
- Prohibited Political Activity
  - Hatch Act
  - Voter Registration
  - Union Organizing
- Supplanting staff or existing volunteers

Benefits for AmeriCorps Members in VISTA

Living Allowance

End of Service Award

Employers of National Service

Health Benefit

Professional Development

Non-competitive Eligibility

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- Review the Concept Paper submission process

Beginning the Application Process

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VISTA Application Process

1

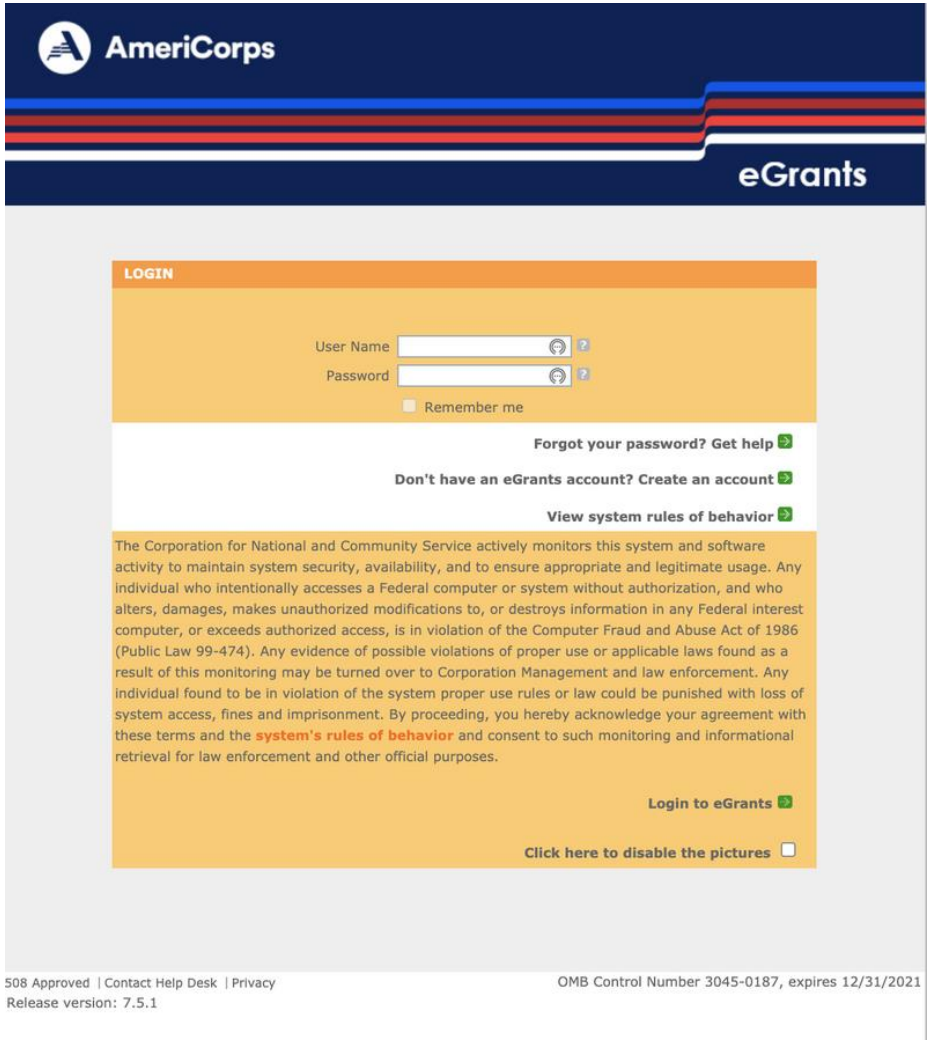
AmeriCorps VISTA Concept Paper

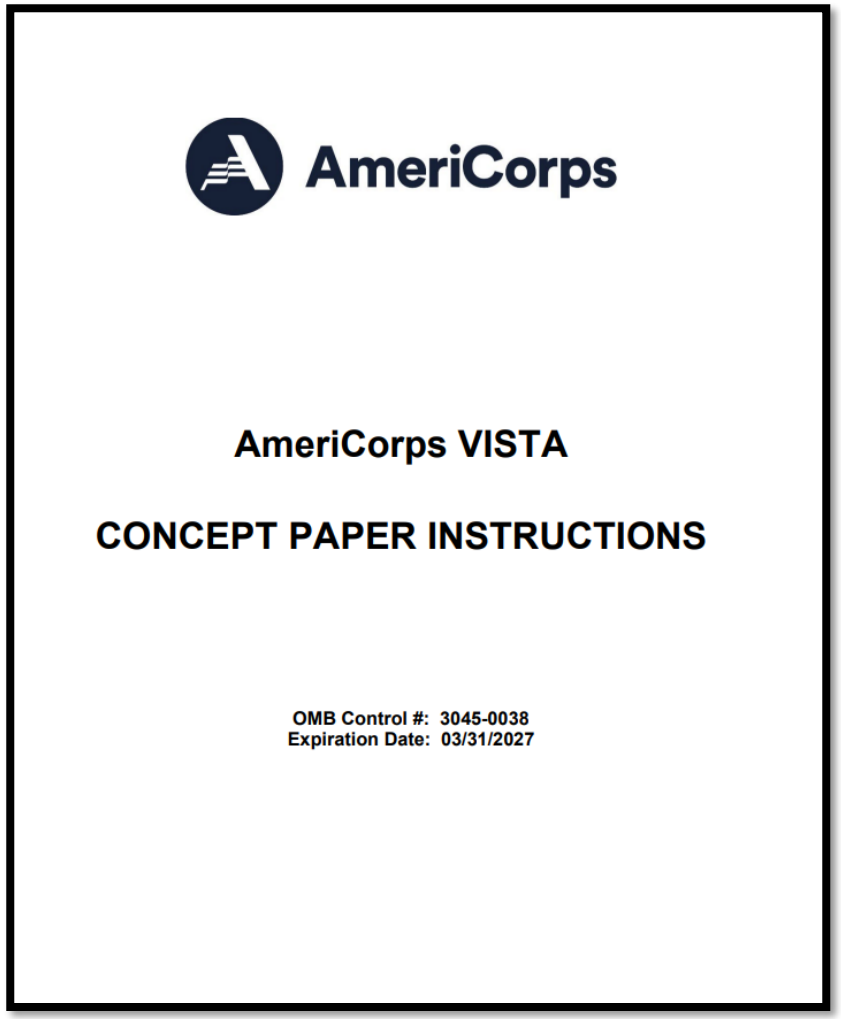
Organizations submit an AmeriCorps VISTA Concept Paper. The Concept Paper is a preliminary screening tool used to evaluate whether the organization would be an appropriate sponsor.

2

AmeriCorps VISTA Project Application

If AmeriCorps approves the Concept Paper, the organization submits an AmeriCorps VISTA Project Application based on the approved Concept Paper.





Characteristics of a Strong Concept Paper

- Aligns with AmeriCorps focus areas/VISTA programming priorities
- Addresses the needs of a low-income community
- Involves the community in project development and implementation
- Leads to organizational capacity and sustainability
- Generates public or private sector resources
- Promotes local volunteer service
- Be specific

What Types of Programming Does VISTA Support?

Focus Areas & Current Programming Priorities

Economic Opportunity

- Housing
- Employment/ Workforce Development
- Federal Benefits access

Focus Areas & Current Programming Priorities

Veterans & Military Families

- Economic Opportunity
- Education
- Healthy Futures

Environmental Stewardship

- Energy Efficiency
- Awareness & Stewardship

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Concept Paper Submission

Concept Papers are submitted in eGrants.

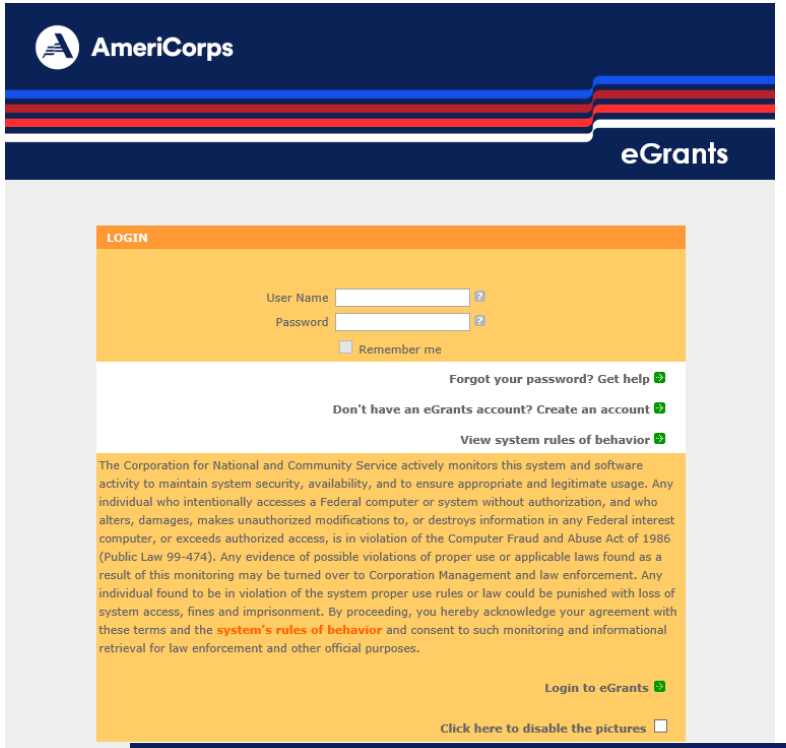
Create an eGrants account:

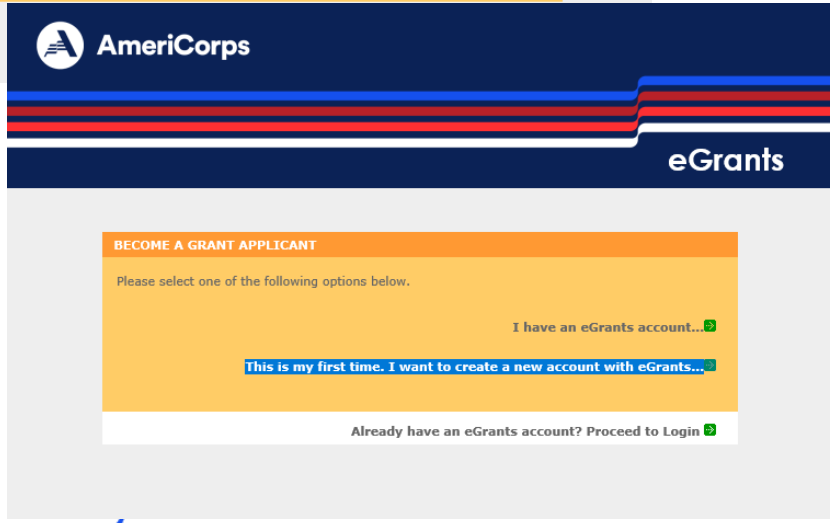
http://egrants.cns.gov NOT grants.gov

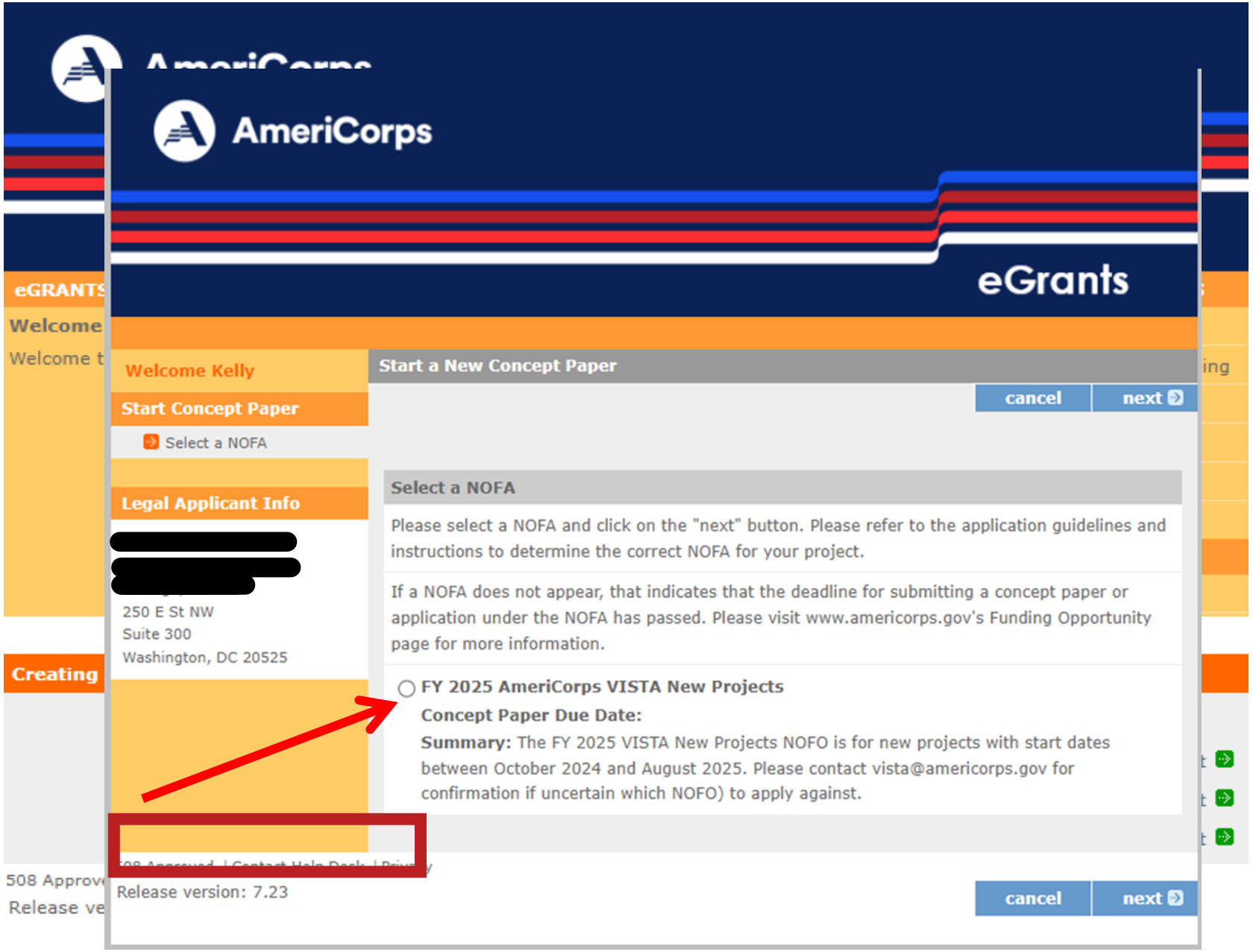
- Click on: Don't have an eGrants account? Create an account.
- Click on: Create a Grantee Account
- Click on: This is my first time. I want to create a new account with eGrants

You will need the following information:

- EIN Number
- UEI Number (not required to create an account, but required to receive federal resources)
- Your organization's contact information
- Your contact information






AmeriCorps
eGrants
Welcome Kelly
Start Concept Paper
Select a NOFA
Legal Applicant Info
250 E St NW
Suite 300
Washington, DC 20525
Start a New Concept Paper
cancel
next
Select a NOFA
Please select a NOFA and click on the "next" button. Please refer to the application guidelines and instructions to determine the correct NOFA for your project.
If a NOFA does not appear, that indicates that the deadline for submitting a concept paper or application under the NOFA has passed. Please visit www.americorps.gov's Funding Opportunity page for more information.
FY 2025 AmeriCorps VISTA New Projects
Concept Paper Due Date:
Summary: The FY 2025 VISTA New Projects NOFO is for new projects with start dates between October 2024 and August 2025. Please contact vista@americorps.gov for confirmation if uncertain which NOFO) to apply against.
Release version: 7.23
cancel
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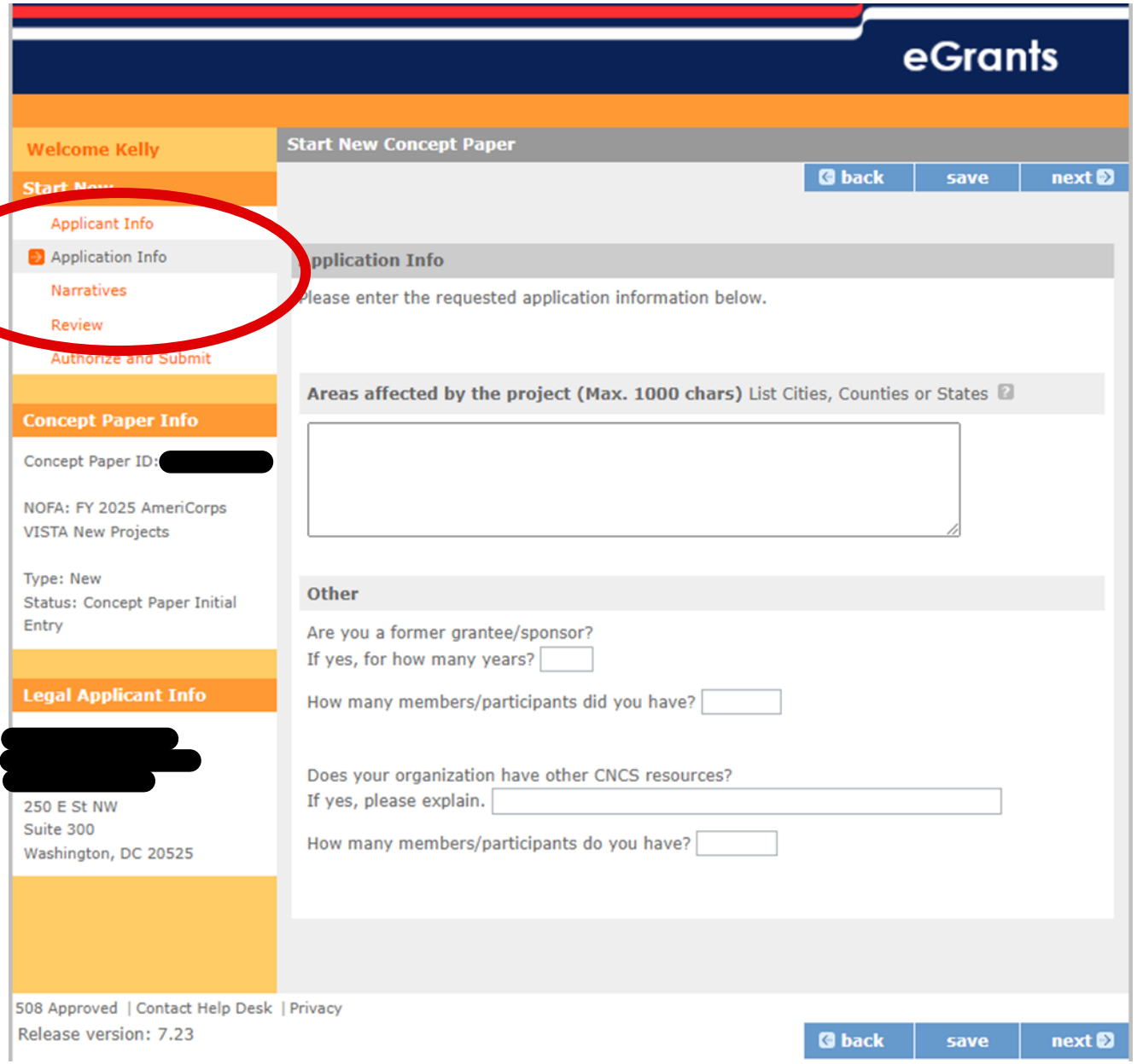
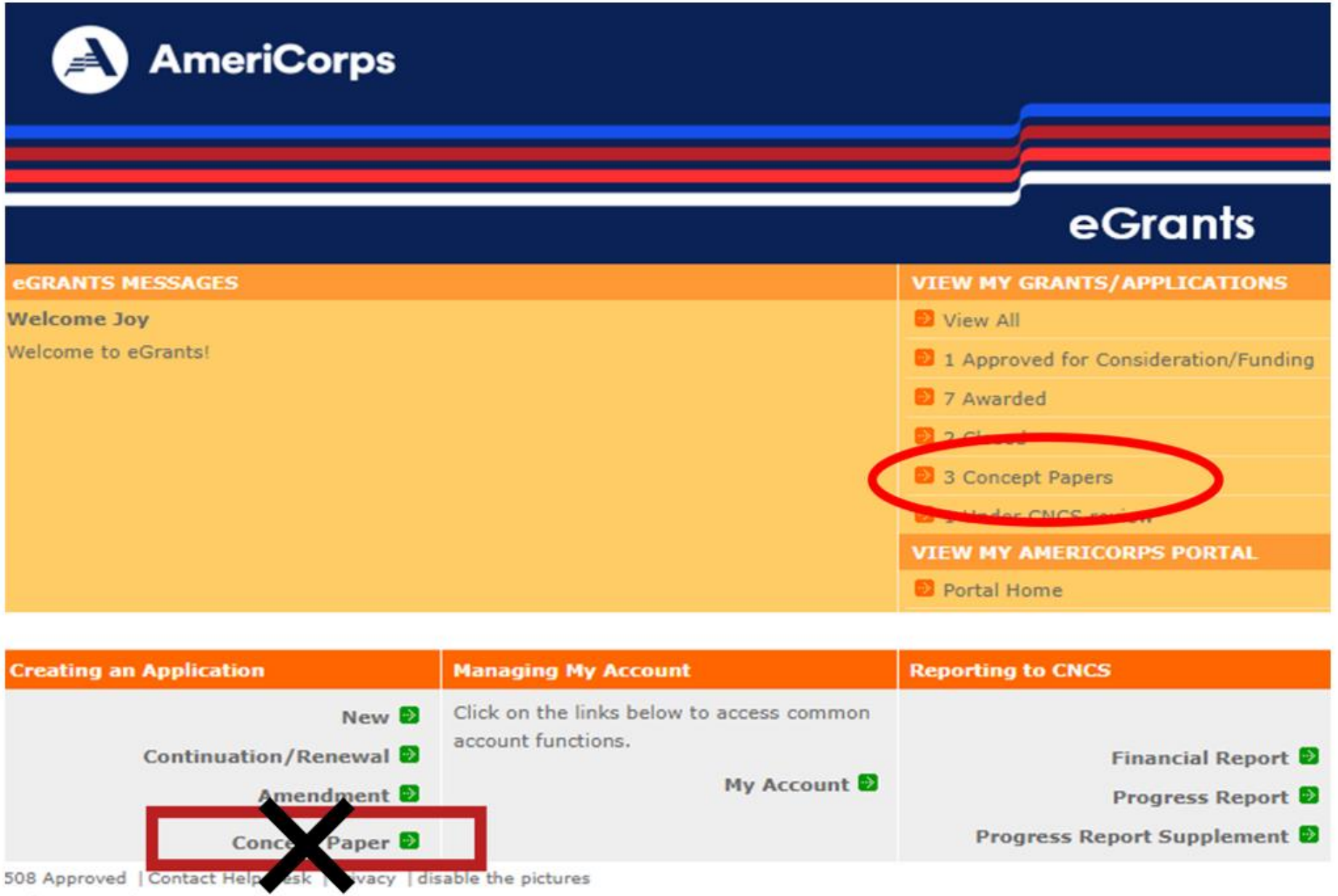


Focus Areas and Objectives

- **Economic Opportunity**
  - ☐ Financial Literacy
  - ☐ Housing
  - ☐ Employment
  - ☐ Find Opportunity
  - ☐ Other Economic Opportunity
  - ☐ Microenterprise
  - ☐ Asset Building
  - ☐ Community Economic Development
- **Education**
- **Healthy Futures**
- **Veterans and Military Families**
- **Disaster Services**
- **Environmental Stewardship**
- **Other**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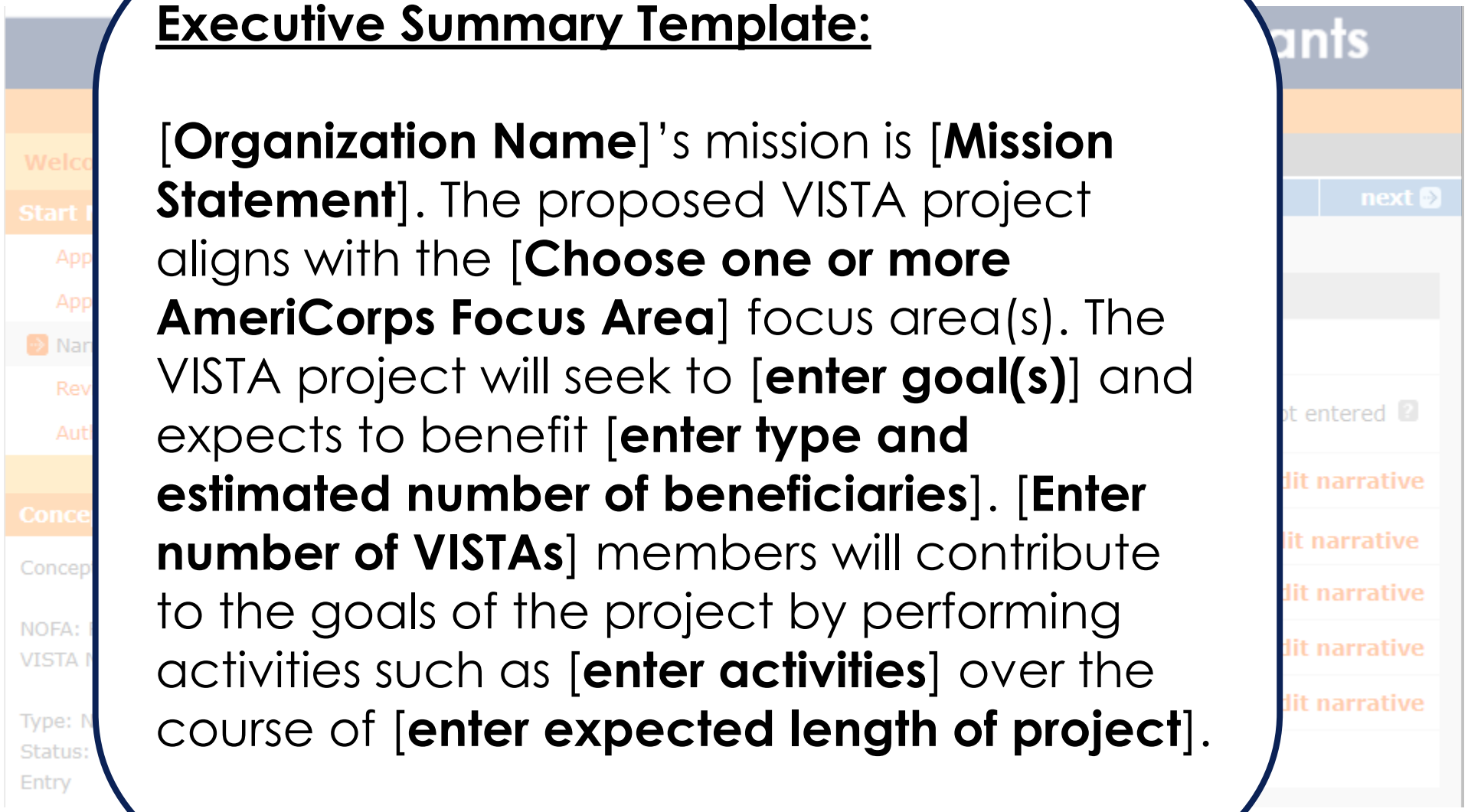
eGrants
eGRANTS MESSAGES
Welcome Joy
Welcome to eGrants!
VIEW MY GRANTS/APPLICATIONS
View All
1 Approved for Consideration/Funding
7 Awarded
3 Concept Papers
VIEW MY AMERICORPS PORTAL
Portal Home
Creating an Application
New
Continuation/Renewal
Amendment
Managing My Account
Click on the links below to access common account functions.
My Account
Reporting to CNCS
Financial Report
Progress Report
Progress Report Supplement
508 Approved | Contact Help Desk | Privacy | disable the pictures



Executive Summary Template:

[**Organization Name**]'s mission is [**Mission Statement**]. The proposed VISTA project aligns with the [**Choose one or more AmeriCorps Focus Area**] focus area(s). The VISTA project will seek to [**enter goal(s)**] and expects to benefit [**enter type and estimated number of beneficiaries**]. [**Enter number of VISTAs**] members will contribute to the goals of the project by performing activities such as [**enter activities**] over the course of [**enter expected length of project**].

What makes an AmeriCorps VISTA Project- and application-successful?

- Clearly shows how the capacity building activities you are proposing directly ties into anti-poverty outcomes in the community you're serving
- Includes deliberate engagement of your beneficiary population and communities
- Is designed with the end in mind – when will your project become self-sustaining and how? With additional staff? Community volunteers? Partnerships with other organizations and agencies?
- Focuses not only on the project activities but on the development of members. Members may be younger and in need of greater supervisor or they may be retired community members that can work on their own. As a project director and VISTA Project Supervisor, you will have to flex your skills to adapt to the people you recruit. It will be worth it in the end!

Timeline

AmeriCorps VISTA Request for Concept Papers Timeline		
Task	**Cycle 1**	**Cycle 2**
Concept Papers	**December 6, 2024**	March 27, 2025
Concept Paper decisions	**January 2025**	April 2025
Application decisions	**March 2025**	July 2025

Contacts and Resources

Contact Your Regional Office	AmeriCorps.gov/contact/region-offices
Request for Concept Papers webpage	AmeriCorps.gov/vistarfcp
Concept Paper Instructions	AmeriCorps.gov/sites/default/files/document/VISTA-Concept-Paper-Instructions.pdf
Sponsor a VISTA member	AmeriCorps.gov/partner/how-it-works/americorps-vista
FY25 Annual Program Guidance	AmeriCorps.gov/sites/default/files/document/2024-09-FY25-AmeriCorps-VISTA-Annual-Guidance.pdf
eGrants	Egrants.cns.gov/espan/main/login.jsp
AmeriCorps Hotline	1-800-942-2677; eGrants technical issues, option 3
System for Award Management (SAM)	SAM.gov

Learn More…

- [AmeriCorps VISTA Playlist]

- **Follow @AmeriCorpsVISTA:** Follow VISTA on [LinkedIn], [Facebook], and [X/Twitter] to stay in the loop of all program updates and hear stories from the field.

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