



AmeriCorps VISTA

Request for Concept Papers

May 2021



What are we discussing today?



- What is AmeriCorps VISTA
- What it can and can't do for your organization
- Who does what
- How can you connect to AmeriCorps staff and Additional Resources

What is AmeriCorps VISTA?

Volunteers in Service To America

Core Principles

- Fighting Poverty
- Empowering Low-income Communities
- Building Capacity for Communities and Organizations
- Creating sustainable solutions



Key Definitions and Terms



- VISTA Project
- Project Sponsor
- Project Director
- Supervisor
- AmeriCorps Regional Office
- VISTA member
- Leader
- Summer Associate

Tell us about yourself!



What type of organization do you represent?

- Local nonprofit
- State-wide nonprofit
- Multi-state nonprofit
- City or municipal government
- State government
- Tribal organization or Tribal government
- Educational Institution (local, higher ed, HBCU)
- Other



ANNUAL IMPACT OF AMERICORPS VISTA

- 1 8,500+ *Members Serving*
- 2 4,500+ *Locations Across the U.S.*
- 3 800,000 *Volunteers Leveraged*
- 4 \$206M *Raised from Other Sources*
- 5 220,000 *Members Since 1965*



VISTA

Volunteers in Service to America

And now a word from our Sponsors...



Homeless and Housing Coalition of Kentucky

The only statewide advocacy organization that addresses homelessness and affordable housing. Coalition of individuals and organizations working together to eliminate the threat of homelessness and fulfill the promise of safe, decent, and affordable housing.

- In FY18, 23 VISTA members recruited 2,155 volunteers, serving more than 40,000 service hours
- \$738,105 in cash resources; \$880,625 in-kind resources
- 1,078 individuals received housing placement services, and 320 individuals transitioned into housing



Audubon Area Community Services

This small project utilizes 5 VISTA members to build capacity for self-sufficiency programs in several rural counties in Western Kentucky. The program has an emphasis on healthy futures, particularly opiate addiction and recovery programs. VISTAs build capacity by creating resource directories, preparing presentations on opiate use and addiction, developing life skills classes, improving community awareness, and preparing informational packets for families of incarcerated adults in treatment programs. In the past program year VISTAs have:

- Recruited 127 Community Volunteers
- Managed 144 Volunteers
- Leveraged over \$110,000 of cash and in-kind resources for the project
- Developed and delivered numerous public presentations to increase awareness of substance abuse and related resources. For example, VISTAs helped implement a Recovery Celebration event in Owensboro, KY with over 600 community members attending.

"We will either find a way or make one"
Saul Alinsky

AmeriCorps VISTA Project Sponsors

VISTA Program Models



Single site model

- Supervisor
- VISTA member(s)

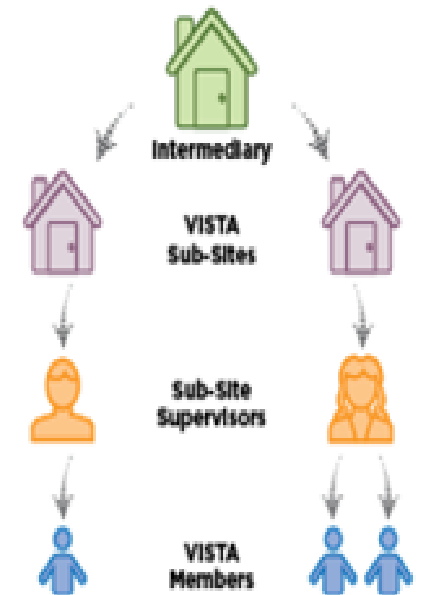
Intermediary model

- VISTA sub-sites are located in the state and may include sites in another state or cluster
- Sub-site supervisors
- VISTA member(s)

Sponsoring Organization



Sponsoring Organization



Responsibilities: Project Management



- Obtain community input – work WITH, not just for the target population(s)
- Performance measures – measuring results through outputs and outcomes
- Reporting
 - Project Progress Reports (PPRs) – two a year
 - VISTA Progress Report Supplement (VPRS) – annual, due mid November



Responsibilities: Member Management



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



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

Cost Sharing



- Affordable way to increase the number of AmeriCorps VISTA members
- Demonstrates that sponsors are invested in the VISTA project's success
- Help expand VISTA resources across the country



AmeriCorps VISTA Members



The Basics

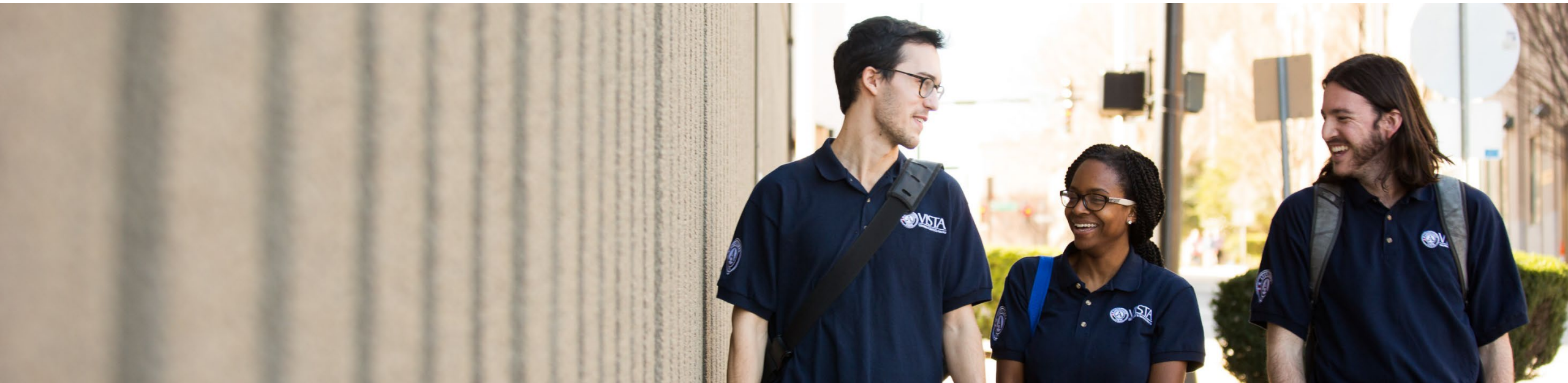
- 18+ years of age
- U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents
- Must pass a criminal history review
- May have specific knowledge, skills, or abilities required by the sponsoring organization
- Local or national recruits



VISTA Leaders



- Projects with eight or more VISTAs 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 VISTA members (do **not** supervise)



What do VISTA Members 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 do VISTA Members NOT do?

Also known as “prohibited activities”



- International work
- Religious activity
- Prohibited political activity
 - Hatch Act
 - Voter registration
 - Union organizing
- Supplanting staff or existing volunteers



Benefits for VISTA Members



Living Allowance

Receive a modest bi-weekly living allowance to cover basic expenses.



End of Service Award

Earn a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award to pay for current education expenses, and to repay qualified student loans. Or choose to receive a cash stipend.



Jobs with Leading Employers

Connect to a network of over 500 employers from all sectors who value AmeriCorps experience.



Health Benefit

Some AmeriCorps programs offer limited health benefit.



Professional Development

Sharpen your skills and bolster your resume.



Non-competitive Eligibility (NCE)

Earn federal non-competitive eligibility, giving you an edge in the federal hiring process.



What Makes A 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. VISTAs may be younger and in need of greater supervisor or they maybe retired community members that can work on their own. As a project director and VISTA Supervisor, you will have to flex your skills to adapt to the people you recruit. It will be worth it in the end!



Beginning the Application Process



VISTA Application Process

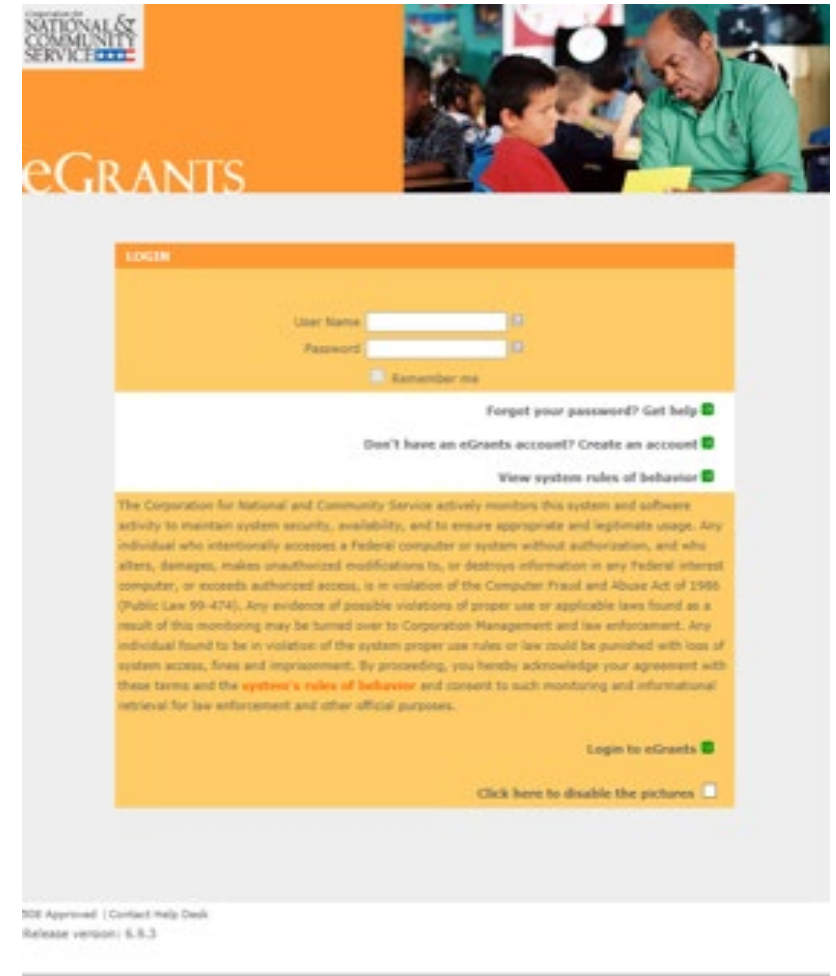


Step 1- AmeriCorps VISTA Concept Paper

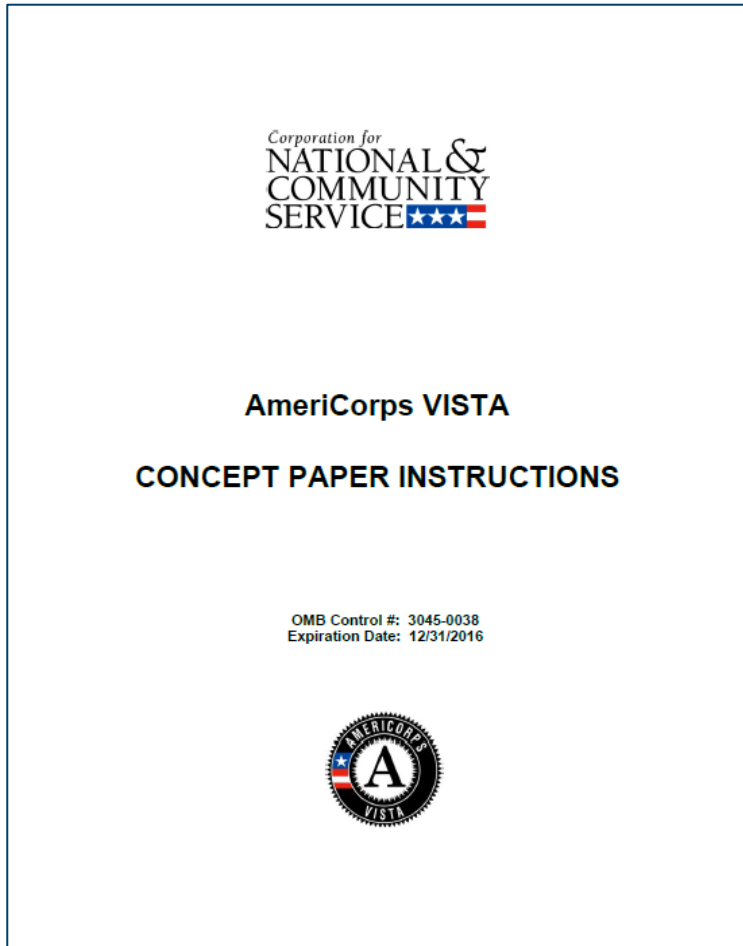
Organizations submit an AmeriCorps VISTA Concept Paper. The Concept Paper is a preliminary screening tool used to evaluate whether the organization would be an appropriate sponsor.

Step 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?



AMERICORPS VISTA ANNUAL PROGRAM GUIDANCE FOR CURRENT AND POTENTIAL PROJECT SPONSORS

Fiscal Year 2021
October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2021



TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Message from the Director.....	2
II. Introduction.....	2
III. Framework for VISTA Programming.....	4
IV. VISTA Programming Priorities for FY 2021.....	5
V. Priority Populations and Regions for FY 2021.....	8
VI. Assessment of Project Applications.....	9
VII. AmeriCorps VISTA Member Recruitment and Training.....	10
VIII. VISTA Concept Paper and Application Process.....	10

Focus Areas & Current Programming Priorities



Economic Opportunity

- Housing
- Employment
- Bridging the Digital Divide



Healthy Futures

- Access to Health Care
- Food Security



EDUCATION

- School readiness
- K-12 success
- Post Secondary success
 - Higher Ed
 - Career & Technical Education



VETERANS & MILITARY FAMILIES



Which programming priority fits your organization?



- Housing
- Employment/Workforce Development
- Digital Divide
- Access to Health Care
- Food Security
- School readiness/learning loss
- K-12 success
- Post-Secondary Success (College and/or Technical Education)
- More than one of the above
- None of the above

Concept Paper Submission

Concept Papers are submitted in eGrants.

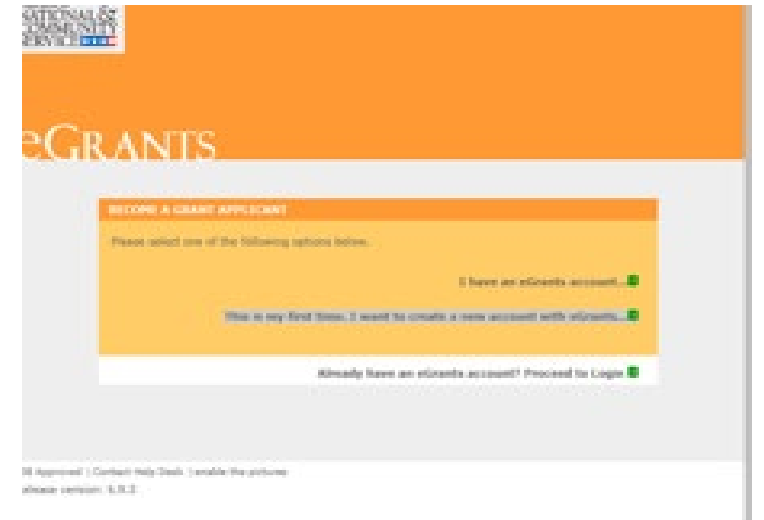
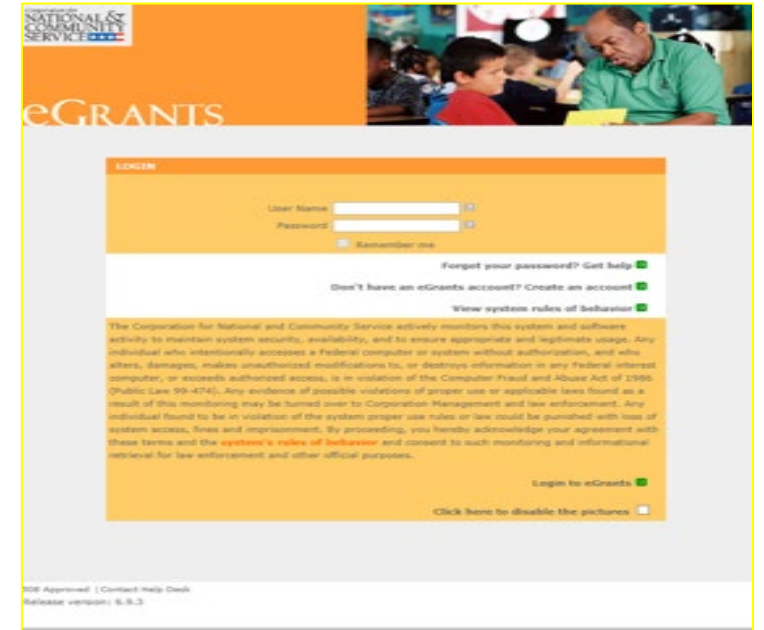
Create an eGrants account:

<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
- DUNS Number (not required to create an account, but needed if your organization is awarded a grant)
- Your organization's contact information
- Your contact information





Corporation for
**NATIONAL &
COMMUNITY
SERVICE**

eGRANTS

eGRANTS MESSAGES
Welcome Johnny

VIEW MY GRANTS/APPLICATIONS
View All

VIEW MY AMERICORPS PORTAL
Portal Home

Creating an Application	Managing My Account	Reporting to CNCS
<p>New →</p> <p>Continuation/Renewal →</p> <p>Amendment →</p> <p>Concept Paper →</p>	<p>Click on the links below to access common account functions.</p> <p>My Account →</p>	<p>Financial Report →</p> <p>Progress Report →</p> <p>Progress Report Supplement →</p>

Under the Creating an Application section

- Click on **Concept Paper**
- Click on the link titled: **FY2021 AmeriCorps VISTA State New NOFA**



Start New

Applicant Info

Application Info

→ Narratives

Review

Authorize and Submit

Enter Narratives for each of the section:

Narratives	
Please Enter or edit the Narrative for each category as appropriate	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> narrative entered ? <input type="checkbox"/> narrative not entered ?	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Need	view/edit narrative
<input type="checkbox"/> Strengthening Communities	view/edit narrative
<input type="checkbox"/> Organizational Capability	view/edit narrative
<input type="checkbox"/> Intermediary Justification	view/edit narrative

Tip: Write all narrative responses in a word processing program (i.e. Word Pad), since eGrants does not have a spell check function and can timeout from inactivity. But be sure to check for strange characters after you paste, like upside-down question marks.

FY 2021 RFCP Timelines



AmeriCorps VISTA Request for Concept Papers Timeline

Task	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
VISTA Headquarters Webinar	September 10, 2020 3 pm eastern	December 2020	February 2021	May 2021
Concept Papers due by 11:59 pm	Thursday October 1, 2020	Monday January 4, 2021	Monday March 15, 2021	Tuesday June 1, 2021
Concept Paper decisions	November 2020	February 2021	April 2021	July 2021
Application decisions	January 2021	April 2021	May 2021	August 2021

Completing the Application Process



- **Submit a Full VISTA Application:** If your organization's concept paper is accepted, your AmeriCorps Regional Office will notify you and request that you submit a full application.
- **Supervisor Orientation:** AmeriCorps will provide a virtual orientation
- **Member Recruitment:** The sponsoring organization will develop a Service Opportunity Listing on eGrants to recruit VISTA candidates. There are resources available to assist with this process.

VAD Sample

TITLE	Mentor Recruitment and Management Systems Designer
SPONSORING ORGANIZATION	Waketa Community Services (WCS)
PROJECT NAME	MentorCorps
PROJECT NUMBER	12ABCD345
PROJECT PERIOD	08/20/20XX - 08/19/20YY
SITE NAME	if applicable
FOCUS AREA(S)	Education (Primary)
NOTE	If your VAD is not accepted, the State Office will note the reason(s) why here.

VISTA Assignment Objectives & Member Activities

PROJECT GOAL	To help ensure that children of incarcerated parents receive the educational, social, and emotional support they need to help them break the cycle of poverty, the MentorCorps VISTA project will build the capacity of WCS by developing a sustainable volunteer recruitment and management system for its mentoring program.
OBJECTIVE	Assess the current state of WCS' efforts in reaching, selecting, and supporting volunteer mentors, and create or revise policies, procedures, and documents to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of the mentor recruitment and matching system.
MEMBER ACTIVITIES	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Research the history of volunteer programs at WCS.<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Identify strengths and challenges of the current program. Based on this report, make a plan for improvement.2. Develop systems for screening and matching mentors.
OBJECTIVE	Set up outreach systems and build partnerships with community organizations in order to spread the word about the mentor program. Develop targeted marketing materials.
MEMBER ACTIVITIES	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Plan for outreach and recruitment.<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Identify skills, abilities, and experiences sought in volunteer mentors.b. Write volunteer task descriptions that include: qualifications, activities, benefits, time commitment, and other expectations.c. Develop partnerships with community organizations whose members are possible mentors or who can support the organization in other ways.d. Develop partnerships with people or organizations that understand the needs of children of prisoners and can assist with the training and support of mentors.2. Market the program to targeted audiences.

Contacts and Resources



Contact Your Regional Office: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/stateoffices>

Request for Concept Papers Notice: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/documents/2018/fy19-ameriacorps-vista-request-concept-papers-and-timeline>

Concept Paper Instructions:

https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/VISTA_Concept%20Paper.pdf

Sponsor a VISTA member: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ameriacorps/ameriacorps-programs/ameriacorps-vista/sponsor-vista-member>

FY21 Program Guidance: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/documents/fy21-annual-program-guidance-ameriacorps-vista>

eGrants: <https://egrants.cns.gov/espan/main/login.jsp>

National Service Hotline: 1-800-942-2677
eGrants technical issues, option 3



VISTA History and Legacy Video

This video showcases stories of ordinary people meeting extraordinary challenges as VISTA members and describes the foundation of VISTA's legacy.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=QfYCddyQw6E#t=43

1964 Presidential Address Highlighting VISTA

This video includes footage from 1964 when President Johnson declared the War on Poverty and proposed VISTA as part of this plan.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ftv7wCbMbg>

What can VISTA do for You?

This video explains how VISTAs bring enthusiasm, experience and commitment to the organizations they serve, helping sponsors deliver better education, health, nutrition. and other services to people in need. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zugQxvjgXAw>



Questions and Answers



Last Poll!

How likely is it that you will apply to become a VISTA project sponsor?

- Very likely and I plan on submitting a Concept Paper by June 1st.
- Very likely but I will wait until the fall or later.
- Maybe but I would like to talk to an AmeriCorps staff person first.
- Maybe but I need to talk to my organization's leadership first.
- Not likely because VISTA doesn't seem a good fit for what my organization needs.
- Not likely but I will continue looking at other national service programs.



Thank You for Attending!

