AmeriCorps VISTA
Request for Concept Paper
September 30, 2021
Agenda

• What is AmeriCorps VISTA
• What AmeriCorps VISTA 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?

- Fighting Poverty
- Empowering Low-Income Communities
- Building Capacity for Communities and Organizations
- Creating Sustainable Solutions
What is AmeriCorps VISTA?

Key Definitions and Terms

- VISTA Project
- Project Sponsor
- Project Director
- Supervisor
- AmeriCorps Region Office
- VISTA Member
- Leader
- Summer Associate
What is AmeriCorps VISTA?

450K+
Total Volunteers Mobilized

3.2M+
Total Volunteer Hours Mobilized
What is AmeriCorps VISTA?

$199M+
Total Resources Leveraged
What is AmeriCorps VISTA?
What is AmeriCorps VISTA?

373K+
Total Individuals Supported with Opioid Programming
This project utilizes 17 VISTA members to empower members of the Sicangu Lakota Oyate and improve the quality of life by building the capacity of organizations and programs that provide services that educate, empower, and engage Rosebud Sioux Tribal Members.

- 17 VISTA members serve at organizations throughout Rosebud that align with AmeriCorps’ Healthy Futures, Education, and Economic Opportunity focus areas
- In FY20, VISTA members generated $2.6+ million in cash resources; $22,917 in-kind resources
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 addition 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.
AmeriCorps VISTA Project Sponsors
AmeriCorps 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 members(s)
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
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 is AmeriCorps 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 AmeriCorps VISTA Members NOT Do?

• International Work
• Religious Activity
• Prohibited Political Activity
  ○ Hatch Act
  ○ Voter Registration
  ○ Union Organizing
• Supplanting staff or existing volunteers
Benefits for AmeriCorps VISTA Members

- Living Allowance
- End of Service Award
- Employers of National Service
- Health Benefit
- Professional Development
- Non-competitive Eligibility
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. 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

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
- Benefits Access

**HEALTHY FUTURES**
- Access to Health Care
- Food Security

**VETERANS & MILITARY FAMILIES**

**EDUCATION**
- School Readiness
- K-12 Success
- Post Secondary Success
  - Higher Education
  - Career & Technical Education

**ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP**
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
### eGrants Messages
- Welcome Note
- Welcome to eGrants!

### View My Grants/Applications
- View All

### View My Account Statements
- Current Statement

### View My AmeriCorps Portal
- Portal Home

### Creating an Application
- New
- Continuation/Renewal
- Amendment
- Concept Paper

### 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
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] VISTA 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].
## AmeriCorps VISTA Request for Concept Papers Timeline

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<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Quarter 1</th>
<th>Quarter 2</th>
<th>Quarter 3</th>
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<tr>
<td>Concept Papers due by 11:59 pm</td>
<td>November 3, 2021</td>
<td>January 26, 2022</td>
<td>March 23, 2022</td>
<td>June 1, 2022</td>
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<td>Concept Paper decisions</td>
<td>December 2021</td>
<td>February 2022</td>
<td>April 2022</td>
<td>July 2022</td>
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<tr>
<td>Application decisions</td>
<td>January 2022</td>
<td>April 2022</td>
<td>May 2022</td>
<td>August 2022</td>
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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.
## Contacts and Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact Your Region Office:</th>
<th><a href="https://americorps.gov/contact/region-offices">https://americorps.gov/contact/region-offices</a></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Request for Concept Papers webpage</td>
<td><a href="https://americorps.gov/vistarfcp">https://americorps.gov/vistarfcp</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>FY 22 Notice</td>
<td>FY22 AmeriCorps VISTA Request for Concept Paper Notice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concept Paper Instructions</td>
<td>AmeriCorps VISTA Concept Paper Instructions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sponsor a VISTA member</td>
<td><a href="https://americorps.gov/partner/how-it-works/americorps-vista">https://americorps.gov/partner/how-it-works/americorps-vista</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>FY22 Annual Program Guidance</td>
<td>FY 22 AmeriCorps VISTA Annual Program Guidance</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Service Hotline</td>
<td>1-800-942-2677; eGrants technical issues, option 3</td>
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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://youtu.be/QfYCddyQw6E

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://youtu.be/_ftv7wCbMbq

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://youtu.be/zugQxvijgXAw
Thank You for Attending!