

Corporation for National and Community Service

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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): FY 2021 AmeriCorps VISTA State New Projects

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 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 indepth description of our core principles, please review the FY 2021 Annual Program Guidance.

ANTI-POVERTY FOCUS

All VISTA service activities must be designed to support one or more specific anti-poverty projects at a site. Applications must clearly define the antipoverty 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 VISTA members bring to the community. Projects must be developed with a goal to phase out the need for VISTAs and have the project continue without VISTA resources.

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 specific anti-poverty initiatives. 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 and Eviction Prevention, Employment/Workforce Development, and Bridging the Digital Divide
- Education: School Readiness, K-12 Success, Career and Technical Education (CTE), College Access and Success, and STEM, including remote learning in all areas
- Healthy Futures: Access to Health Care particularly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Food Security, and Opioid Addiction Prevention and Recovery
- Veterans and Military Families: Economic Opportunity, Education, and Healthy Futures
- Priority Populations: Rural communities, Indian country, and areas of concentrated 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. CNCS provides a modest living allowance depending on the county in which the VISTA 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 RESPONSIBILITIES: Nonprofit organizations, Native American Tribes, and state, city, and local government agencies are eligible to apply to be AmeriCorps VISTA sponsors. Eligible not-for-profit organizations are NOT limited to those with IRS 501(c)(3) status but those with any IRS 501(c) status that focus on anti-poverty community development. Organizations that focus solely on advocacy and 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 VISTA members. A VISTA project may be continued on a year to year basis based upon available resources, performance, and CNCS priorities.

Guidance and Instructions

- [FY 2021 AmeriCorps VISTA Program Guidance](#)
- [AmeriCorps VISTA Concept Paper Instructions](#)
- [AmeriCorps VISTA Project Application Instructions](#)
- [AmeriCorps VISTA Standard Budget Instructions](#)
- [FY 2021 Request for Concept Papers Timeline](#)

Additional Resources

- [General Information about AmeriCorps VISTA](#)
- [Sponsoring a VISTA Project](#)
- [Create and Manage an eGrants Account](#)
- [View Recorded Webinar on the RFCP Process](#)