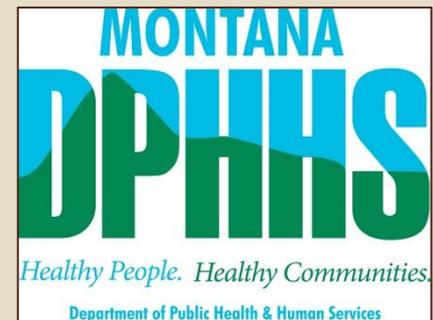


Applying for an AmeriCorps VISTA with the Prevention Resource Center



About VISTA



- VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) is a federal anti-poverty program administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service
- VISTA provides full-time volunteers to support projects at nonprofit, grassroots organizations, and local government agencies that operate programs to help alleviate poverty in the United States.
- Any nonprofit organization, educational institution, or state, county, or local government agency is eligible to sponsor a VISTA project.

History of VISTA



- The VISTA program has been addressing the needs of low-income communities since 1964.
- VISTA, like Head Start and other lasting anti-poverty programs, was created by The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 to serve the needs of the poorest Americans.
- 50 years later, more than 180,000 committed individuals have joined forces with 15,000 local organizations to strengthen low-income communities.

History of the PRC VISTA Project



- The VISTA project started alongside the PRC in 1996 with the intent to implement programs at the community level and to assist in the development of collaborative community prevention councils which promote social welfare and public health through cooperative programming.
- The first community VISTAs started in early February of 1997. These 14 members were a diverse group, including four Montanans, and coming from as far away as Massachusetts and New York to serve in communities throughout the state.
- The number of VISTAs on the project fluctuated in the upper-teens, with a jump to 42 VISTAs in January of 2010.
- The summer of 2011 saw the addition of Summer Associates who serve 10 week terms from June-August supporting summer learning activities and Summer Food Service Programs.

PRC Primary Goals



- **Reduce Child Abuse**
- **Reduce Youth Substance Abuse**
 - **Reduce Youth Violence**
 - **Reduce School Dropout**
 - **Reduce Teen Pregnancy**

PRC VISTA Focus Areas



- **Healthy Futures**

- Access to healthcare and prevention programs.
- Nutrition, food security, and childhood hunger programs.

- **Education**

- School drop-out prevention programs.

- **Native Americans**

- **Veterans**

- Services to Veterans, active duty military members and their families.

What Makes a Successful VISTA Project?



- It is critical for the low-income community to be involved in both the planning and execution of the VISTA project.
- Ensure the project addresses a community need that relates to a PRC goal or VISTA focus area rather than an organizational need.
- Sustainability: the project should carry on after the VISTA completes his/her term.
- Indirect service by the VISTA: instead of tutoring youth, for example, VISTAs may help create or expand a tutoring program by recruiting volunteers to tutor by obtaining funding for the program.

Questions to Consider



- Does the project address a community need?
- What are the long term goals of the project?
- How will you include the local community, specifically low-income individuals, in project planning and implementation?
- How will a VISTA support these efforts?
- How will the project move individuals and communities out of poverty?
- How will we measure the project's impact?
- With what other community groups or organizations will you collaborate?
- Who will supervise the VISTA and is s/he willing to meet with the VISTA at least once a week to review the work plan, progress, and to provide guidance?

Examples of Acceptable Service



Acceptable Service	Capacity Building	Sustainable Activities
Recruit Volunteers	Develop forms, volunteer assignments	Develop volunteer handbook
Train direct service providers	Write training curriculum or train the trainer curriculum	Develop training manual
Coordinate projects	Develop procedures and systems	Develop volunteer management system and procedural guide
Public speaking	Develop speakers bureau	Develop community partnerships
Write press releases	Develop press kits, media, database	Secure media partners
Organize fundraising events	Grant writing; develop database	Secure project staffing
Organize task forces/coalitions	Develop leadership structure of task force coalition	Create infrastructure
Conduct outreach	Design brochures posters	Create mechanism for project evaluation

Unacceptable Service Activities



- Direct service (i.e. tutoring, serving meals) unless it is utilized to educate the VISTA about their project and does not occur over an extended period of time.
- VISTAs are prohibited from performing activities or duties that would otherwise be carried out by employees and/or volunteers, or would supplant in the hiring of, or result in the displacement of, employed workers, or would impair existing contracts for service.
- VISTAs are prohibited from:
 - Endorsing or promoting, or appearing to, religion or a specific religious belief.
 - Engaging in electoral activities; engaging in lobbying; or participating in demonstrations.

The Cost-Share Partnership



As a cost share partner, a sponsor contributes part of the living allowance of its VISTA. The cost share for the PRC is:

Year	Training Cost	Support Cost	Total
1	\$1,500	\$3,500	\$5,000
2	\$1,500	\$5,500	\$7,000
3	\$1,500	\$7,500	\$9,000
4	\$1,500	\$12,000	\$13,500

The PRC will send an Invoice prior to the VISTA'S term. Cost share payments are due no later than 90 days after the VISTA begins his/her service term.

The Application: Preparation



- Keep in mind that the PRC accepts site applications twice a year. These are due on the 1st Friday of March (for July placements) or September (for January placements).
- **Community Involvement:**
 - You must engage the low-income community members that will be served to help plan the project, comment on the application, and support the VISTA and the overall project.
- **Supervision:**
 - Who in your organization will supervise the VISTA? How much time will the supervisor have to supervise a VISTA (supervisors at a minimum should meet with their VISTA at least one hour per week)? The supervisor serves as a manager and a mentor for VISTAs.
- **Site Location:**
 - Where will the VISTA serve? Does your organization have the space and equipment to support additional persons?

The Application: Site Assurances



- If a VISTA is matched with your project, the site supervisor is expected to participate in required PRC training events to include conference calls and webinars.
- Submit a letter of support from your agency's board of directors indicating they understand the role of the VISTA member and support the proposed project.
- PRC VISTA recruiting is a partnership between your workstation and the PRC office. Timely response to referred VISTA candidates is essential. You will need to provide a written statement of assurance that your site will contact a referred candidate within 48 hours of referral.
- If a VISTA is matched with your project, would the sponsoring organization, another organization or individual be able to help the VISTA with free or reduced-cost housing during their year of service? If so, you will need to describe the financial arrangement.
- You will need to indicate whether or not the sponsoring organization has conducted the accessibility self-evaluation required by 45 CFR 1232.7 C (Americans with Disabilities Act).

The Application: Narratives & Attachments



You will need to submit information regarding:

- Agency information
- Programmatic information
- Community need
- Volunteer support (in regards to the VISTA)
- VISTA Member Assignment Description (VAD)
- VISTA site-specific Position Description: include knowledge, skills and abilities; attributes; VISTA duties; and physical demands including a statement of reasonable accommodation.
- On-Site Orientation & Training: include the steps you plan to take to acquaint the VISTA to the organization, community and project during the first 2 weeks the member is placed with your organization.

The Application: VISTA Assignment Description & Performance Measures



- **VISTA Assignment Description (VAD):** the VAD is a roadmap of your VISTA member's work for the year.
 - Define project goal(s) and end outcome of the project.
 - Determine the steps the VISTA will take to reach project goals.
 - Include reasonable timelines as well as quantifiable outcomes and outputs.
- **Performance Measures:** performance measurement is the ongoing, systematic process of tracking the VISTA project's outputs and outcomes.
 - Required by the Corporation for National & Community Service (CNCS). Performance measurement satisfies the need of funders and stakeholders (including CNCS participants, board members, community members, staff & clients) to see that the project is getting results.
 - You must select which performance measures you and the VISTA will track during the service term and identify a realistic goal for each performance measure.
 - Performance measure goals need to be included in the VAD.
 - The VISTA will report performance measure progress to the PRC in the Quarterly Report.
 - The PRC will track and report performance measure progress to CNCS.

The Application: Final Approval & Memorandum of Understanding



If the PRC and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) approves your project, a Memorandum of Understanding is signed between your site and the PRC.

- The MOU discusses the federal law, regulations, and policies applicable to VISTA and outlines the specific legal obligations of each party.
- The MOU must be signed and returned to the PRC prior to the VISTAs first day of service.

Supervisor Orientation



- By this time you have decided who the site supervisor will be, this person will then need to become better acquainted with the VISTA program.
- All site supervisors will need to participate in an afternoon long orientation. This orientation will cover:
 - Terms and conditions
 - Specific ways to support VISTAs
 - The VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)

The Recruitment Process



- The PRC will post the job description on the AmeriCorps website, but you should also begin local recruitment.
- Interested applicants need to submit an application online through the AmeriCorps website.
- The PRC will screen all applicants and send you the most qualified for you to follow up with.
- Some ideas for local recruitment:
 - Word of mouth – you never know who might be interested!
 - Post fliers on community bulletin boards.
 - Utilize local and social media to help you recruit.

VISTA Selection



- Notify the PRC once you have chosen a candidate you believe is well suited for VISTA service. Please note: you CANNOT offer the position directly to the applicant, only CNCS can.
- Once you've contacted the PRC, we will select the applicant through the on-line system and submit an applicant recommendation packet to CNCS for approval.
- When CNCS receives the recommendation online, state office staff will review it to verify applicant eligibility and suitability. VISTA supervisors are notified when recommended applicants are or are not approved by the state office.

Your VISTA's Orientation



In addition to the On-Site Orientation and Training Plan submitted with the VISTA Host Site Application, VISTAs are required to participate in a 5 week PSO Blend course provided by AmeriCorps VISTA. The PSO Blend will run concurrently with the On-Site Orientation and Training.

The PSO Blend orientation includes several self-directed courses along with a facilitated 5 week curriculum that includes self-directed tutorials, facilitated webinars, fieldwork, homework assignments, onsite orientation and training to the host site and community. VISTAs are expected to fully participate in all components of the training.

The first day of the PSO Blend, determined by the VISTA Training Unit, is the VISTA's first day of service. VISTA members are expected to relocate prior to and be onsite by this date.

PRC Requirements during VISTA's service term



VISTAs are first and foremost responsible to the Corporation for National & Community Service, then the Prevention Resource, then the worksite. There will be some aspect of the VISTA's work required by CNCS & the PRC that takes precedence over site responsibilities, including:

- Training: PSO, CBI webinar series, Serve Montana Symposium, other trainings TBD
- Quarterly Reports
- VISTA Impact Statements
- Other information requests from CNCS or the PRC
- National Days of Service:
Martin Luther King Jr Day (January)
September 11th Day of Service & Remembrance

Questions???



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