



# IMPACT DATA TOOLKIT

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## **Resources to Effectively Measure, Collect, and Report Impact Data**

The AmeriCorps VISTA Impact Data Toolkit is comprised of effective practices, action guidelines, and other tools to enhance the measurement, collection, and reporting of impact data for VISTA Leaders and members across the country.

### **WINTER 2016 ACTION LEARNING CHALLENGE TEAM:**

Nathaniel Collins, VISTA Leader

Shannon Palka, VISTA Leader

Tassandra Rios, VISTA Leader

Kenisha White, VISTA Leader

Team Coach: Kapila Wewegama

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First and foremost, thank you Kapila Wewegama for coaching our team through the action learning process. Without your guidance, coupled with your enthusiasm, patience, and flexibility, this toolkit would not have been nearly as comprehensive or coherent. Further, your facilitation style helped us grow from four individuals with distinct styles and priorities into one cohesive team. We cannot overstate your importance in this project.

Thank you to the Corporation for National and Community Service headquarters, our State Offices in California, New York, and West Virginia and the Technical Assistance Providers: Education Northwest and JBS International, Inc. Also, thank you to Andy King, whose advice and encouragement during the planning process was vital to the creation and distribution of this tool.

To the VISTA Leaders across the country who answered our survey, and to the VISTA members who helped create our survey, we thank you all. We especially want to thank those who submitted the tools and ideas they use at their host sites for inclusion here. We appreciate the contribution of your collective wisdom, without which this toolkit would not be as effective.

We would also like to acknowledge our host site organizations: the California State University; the International Rescue Committee in San Diego; NYC Service, Office of the Mayor; and the United Way of Central West Virginia. Finally, thank you to our supervisors, who let us sneak away from our desks a couple hours per week and who provided ongoing support--from sharing resources to reading through rough drafts--so that we could take this toolkit from a vaguely-defined dream into a tangible product that will support AmeriCorps VISTA members and Leaders across the country.

## MEET THE 2016 ALC IMPACT DATA TEAM



**NATHANIEL COLLINS** is the VISTA Leader with the United Way of Central West Virginia (UWCWV), which focuses efforts in education-based nonprofits across rural West Virginia. He currently supervises

12 AmeriCorps VISTA members throughout West Virginia, while still serving at his host site of Literacy Volunteers of Monongalia and Preston Counties (LVMPC). In the past year, the UWCWV has gained 5 new AmeriCorps VISTA members, and Nathaniel has helped the LVMPC more than double its numbers of both active volunteers and community members served.



**TASSANDRA RIOS** is the VISTA Leader at the International Rescue Committee in San Diego. Currently, she supports 6 fellow VISTA members across 5 sites working to build and sustain anti-poverty programs among refugee and immigrant communities.

Tassandra also acts as a mentor and resource to 30 active AmeriCorps VISTA members throughout San Diego by facilitating days of service, training opportunities, and social events. A San Diego native, Tassandra completed her first year of service at UC San Diego as a Program Coordinator with Education Corps, a tutoring program which connects underserved K-12 students to college mentors.



**SHANNON PALKA** is a VISTA Leader for the California State University (CSU) STEM

VISTA Program, which aims to increase interest and retention of traditionally marginalized students in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). After joining the program as a VISTA member in its inaugural year, Shannon became the first CSU STEM VISTA Leader, and in addition to supporting and mentoring 15 members, she has been integral to the growth of the program, which doubled in size during her tenure. She has also spearheaded efforts to connect VISTA members in the Los Angeles region through quarterly trainings and day of service events.



**KENISHA WHITE** is currently serving as a VISTA Leader with NYC Service, an agency within the

Office of the Mayor that promotes volunteerism, engages New Yorkers in service, builds volunteer capacity, and mobilizes the power of volunteers to impact New York City's greatest needs. She supports 9 VISTA members who are spread across 7 city agencies, increasing their capacity to lift New Yorkers out of poverty. Kenisha completed her first term of service as a VISTA member in Knoxville, TN. She joined the Action Learning Challenge because she wanted an opportunity to contribute the AmeriCorps VISTA ALC legacy. As the founding VISTA Leader for her program, she wanted to leave behind a legacy (systems) that will ensure effective data measurement, collection, and reporting, and the ALC provided the opportunity to do just that.

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Across the United States, AmeriCorps VISTA members support nonprofit organizations, local city agencies, and faith-based organizations in their work to alleviate poverty. VISTAs help their sponsoring sites and the communities they serve by increasing organizational effectiveness, expanding the scope of provided services, and building community partnerships. To that end, VISTA members across the nation are producing tangible evidence of the work that is being done to help lift fellow citizens out of poverty. However, VISTA Leaders, members, and sponsoring sites at times find it challenging to effectively assess the impact of capacity building activities and communicate progress to stakeholders. Therefore, we must more effectively collect, measure, and report impact data across AmeriCorps VISTA projects so that we are better able to understand the impact VISTA members are making in the fight against poverty.

The challenge to effectively measure, collect and report impact data affects VISTA Leaders and members across the nation. Presently, sites vary in their understandings of reporting measures and data collection processes, as many have distinct internal methods of defining, collecting, measuring, and reporting impact data. Some host sites and members may lack knowledge, skills, and experience with evaluation processes. They may also misunderstand the current CNCS performance measures. With an opportunity to learn and adapt effective practices and strategies for collecting, measuring, and reporting VISTA project impact data, Leaders and members will be able to better identify and communicate project impact, activity value, and growth opportunities to their sites, communities, CNCS, and other national stakeholders.

Without addressing this need, VISTA Leaders, members, and host sites will be unable to effectively capture the impact of capacity building activities and services in the fight against poverty. Therefore, VISTA Leaders, members, and projects may miss the opportunity to truly recognize the positive impact they are having in communities and build on those strengths to better support the communities VISTAs aim to serve. Incomplete measurement also fails to provide members and projects the best information to evaluate progress and identify opportunities for growth.

There are several challenges that contribute to the current need for measuring, collecting, and reporting impact data effectively and efficiently. VISTAs work in areas like education, health, homelessness, and veterans' services in rural and urban communities throughout the nation. As a result, there is great diversity across project sites with respect to the needs of the community, services, and population served. In addition, sponsoring organizations often have their own methods of assessment which may conflict with, complicate, or replicate the CNCS performance measures. Lack of proper understanding of the language used in current performance measures can lead to misunderstanding, lack of clarity, and other barriers in tracking data at individual level.

## **VISION, MISSION, & GOAL**

### **VISION**

The vision of this AmeriCorps VISTA Action Learning Challenge team is that all VISTA Leaders and members will have access to materials that provide the requisite knowledge to participate in the reporting process with skills such as measuring, collecting, and summarizing impact data to their supervisors throughout their term of service.

### **MISSION**

The AmeriCorps VISTA Action Learning Challenge team is committed to compiling effective practices that will include helpful guidelines and tangible tools for enhanced measurement, collection, and reporting of data for VISTA Leaders and members across the country. This will enable communities and host site organizations to accurately convey stories of their impact, which recognizes and celebrates the CNCS mission of alleviating poverty.

### **GOAL**

By the end of April 2016, the AmeriCorps VISTA Action Learning Challenge team will compile a toolkit comprising of a glossary of terms, sample tracking tools, a suggested timeline, and other relevant resources, which will enable VISTA Leaders and members to effectively measure, collect, and report project impact data to their supervisors.

## **BACKGROUND OF VISTA DATA REPORTING SURVEY**

During the initial stages of our project, we spent time discussing the challenges fellow VISTA Leaders and members faced or are facing when measuring, collecting, and reporting impact data to their supervisors.

Based on our conversation, we concluded that many of the biggest challenges stemmed from lack of knowledge among the VISTA member and, often times, the VISTA Leader. This includes Leaders and members lacking an understanding of CNCS performance measures as well as what data to measure, collect, or report at their project sites. Our team also discussed the challenge of varying definitions of terms at the local level. Hence, our team theorized that inadequate understanding and knowledge of the CNCS' Performance Measurement framework have also contributed to the lack of accuracy in measuring and/or collecting, but especially reporting impact data.

In order to validate the assumption that our experiences are common--maybe even universal--our team surveyed our fellow VISTA Leaders across the country to gain a broader understanding of their biggest challenges in effectively measuring, collecting, and reporting impact data to their supervisors.

By conducting this survey, our team had the opportunity to gather valuable feedback from our peers, which revealed that many VISTA Leaders and members are facing similar challenges in collecting and reporting impact data. This enabled us to identify which components to include in the Impact Data Toolkit to address these challenges over time.

## **INTRODUCTION TO AMERICORPS VISTA IMPACT DATA TOOLKIT**

The AmeriCorps VISTA Impact Data Toolkit is a compilation of relevant tools that AmeriCorps VISTA Leaders and members may use to more effectively collect, measure, and report impact data to their supervisors. These tools will increase your knowledge of CNCS' performance measures, as well as help you understand your role in collecting and reporting impact data to your supervisors. The Impact Data Toolkit will also help you to better identify and communicate your project's impact with your site as well as with the community, CNCS, and other national stakeholders. For your convenience, you may review descriptions of the components included in this toolkit below to help you navigate the tools and resources the ALC Team has assembled.

1. **[VISTA LEADER COLLECTING & REPORTING IMPACT DATA CHECKLIST](#)**  
VISTA Leaders and members may use this checklist to customize a timeline for measuring, collecting, and reporting impact data to their supervisors throughout service. See page 9.
2. **[LEADER SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR GUIDING MEMBERS WITH THE IMPACT DATA PROCESS](#)**  
This self-assessment is designed to support the VISTA Leader in his/her preparation for following up with VISTA members during the reporting process. See page 10.
3. **[CHECKING-IN WITH MEMBERS DURING THE IMPACT DATA PROCESS](#)**  
This check-in sheet is used by VISTA Leaders to call their members to make sure they fully understand what each question on the report is asking, and to insure that the members are inputting the data correctly. See page 11.
4. **[MEMBER GUIDE FOR SUPPORTING THE IMPACT DATA PROCESS](#)**  
This guide is designed to support VISTA members in their efforts to effectively generate all the necessary information needed to successfully collect and/or report impact data to their supervisors. See page 12.
5. **[SAMPLE TOOLS FOR COLLECTING AND REPORTING IMPACT DATA](#)**  
This toolkit includes six templates for collecting and reporting impact data. Each template is unique and may be customized to fit your program's needs. See page 14.
6. **[FAQ FOR VISTA LEADERS](#)**  
This section will quickly answers the questions VISTA Leaders and members have most often when collecting and reporting impact data. See page 17.
7. **[PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT RESOURCES](#)**  
CNCS has provided a number of resources, such as eCourses and activities, which will further deepen your knowledge of performance measures as well as the impact data process at your site. See page 19.
8. **[GLOSSARY](#)**  
This section outlines important performance measurement terms to assist VISTA Leaders and members in clarifying definitions used by CNCS. See page 23.

## **VISTA LEADER COLLECTING & REPORTING IMPACT DATA CHECKLIST**

The following checklist is designed to guide VISTA Leaders in navigating the collecting and reporting impact data process as well as enable them to better support their members. You will note suggested steps to take at each phase as well as on-going best practices to ensure that impact data is efficiently reported to your supervisor.

### **BEFORE YOUR MEMBER ARRIVES**

- Review CNCS performance measures for your project
- Review VADs for all your VISTA members and identify which data collection and reporting tool(s) best fit your project site
- Schedule time to meet with your VISTA team to discuss collecting and reporting impact data priorities and expectations
- Become familiar with the Impact Data Toolkit
- Customize your own templates to aid in collecting and reporting data

### **DURING VISTA MEMBER ON-SITE ORIENTATION & TRAINING (OSOT)**

- Introduce VISTA members to the Impact Data Toolkit, the tools your project will use, the timeline you will follow, and the data collecting/reporting priorities and the expectations for you, your members, and the program supervisor
- Provide VISTA members with the “Member Guide for Supporting the Impact Data Process”
- Provide VISTA members with a sample report to demonstrate what is expected to be reported and how an accurately completed report should look

### **TWO WEEKS BEFORE FIRST REPORT IS DUE**

- Send a friendly reminder of the approaching deadline to your VISTAs
- Ask your VISTA members if there are any lingering questions or uncertainties about data collection or reporting

### **SIX MONTHS INTO SERVICE**

- Schedule a meeting with your team to discuss the successes and challenges of using the reporting tools
- Assess the process and tools, and decide if improvements can be made going forward

### **ON-GOING**

- Follow up or schedule an ongoing check in with your VISTA team to address any major concerns or needs, as well as celebrate accomplishments
- Transfer data into a reporting template as you receive reports from VISTA members
- Communicate the VISTA member and project impact to other VISTA members, CNCS, the community, and other stakeholders through annual reports, service spotlights, social media posts, etc.

## **LEADER SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR GUIDING MEMBERS WITH THE IMPACT DATA PROCESS**

This self-assessment is designed to support the VISTA Leader in his/her preparation for following up with VISTA members during the reporting process-in order to assess understanding and offer additional training (or resources). The questions provided in this tool will guide the VISTA Leader as he/she checks in with VISTA member(s) prior to the submission of the member's report.

**1) I have spent time reviewing the Corporation for National and Community Service's key terms and definitions provided with my VISTA members. What clarifying questions might my VISTAs have?**

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**2) Do my VISTA members understand their involvement in the reporting process at their site? What conversations have I had with each host site?**

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**3) Have my VISTA members received the necessary training for *how* to effectively report on their project progress?**

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**4) Have my VISTA members already worked with their supervisors to design and create the data collection tools as suggested with their site-specific performance measures?**

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**5) Have my VISTA members and their host sites worked to distribute the relevant pre-organizational assessment? What are the next steps?**

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**6) What questions do I anticipate receiving from my VISTA members in regard to project reporting?**

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**7) How am I supporting my VISTAs in the time leading up to their report submission?**

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**Final Notes:**

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## **CHECKING-IN WITH MEMBERS DURING THE IMPACT DATA PROCESS**

This check-in sheet is used by VISTA Leaders to call their members to make sure they fully understand what each question on the report is asking, and to insure that members are inputting the data correctly. The check-in sheet is best for VISTA Leaders who do not have constant or regular face-to-face meetings with their members.

VISTA Leader: \_\_\_\_\_

VISTA member: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**1) Do you have any questions about your report?**

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**2) Are you confused by any terms, or definitions on the report that you need answered or clarified?**

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**3) Are there any activities on your VAD (such as grants, volunteer hours, etc.) that you are unsure about where or how to track them in the report?**

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**4) Are you understanding how to use, and make the best of, the report form?**

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**5) How have you been tracking your numbers to make sure they are correct?**

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**6) What is one story about a success you had this reporting period?**

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**7) What is one story about a challenge that you faced this reporting period?**

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**8) Do you have any questions for me?**

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## **MEMBER GUIDE FOR SUPPORTING THE IMPACT DATA PROCESS**

This guide is designed to support the VISTA member in their efforts to effectively generate all the necessary information needed to successfully collect and/or report impact data to their supervisors. It includes self-guided questions that will enable the VISTA member to assess their individual host site data collection/reporting preparation process. The hope for this guide is that the VISTA member will use this as a tool to ask the relevant questions of their VISTA Leader and/or supervisor about the VISTA member's involvement in the data collection/reporting process.

### **PERFORMANCE MEASURES FAMILIARITY CHECKLIST**

**Did my host site already conduct its needs/community assessment? What is the next step?**

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**Have the relevant pre-organizational assessment(s) been created? What is the timeline for distribution?**

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**What are my host site's outputs and outcomes? How are the performance measures aligned with functions listed in my VAD? (See included glossary for list of important terms.)**

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**How are the activities outlined in my VAD aligned with CNCS' performance measures? What are the specified timelines?**

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**What are my responsibilities in measuring, collecting and reporting impact data to my site supervisor?**

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**What are my supervisor's expectations of my involvement in the collecting and/or reporting of impact data?**

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**What are the reporting timelines?**

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What is my host site's reporting process?

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Who should I go to with reporting questions?

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What items from the "Impact Data Toolkit" can I incorporate?

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### **DATA COLLECTION CHECKLIST**

Am I familiar with the data collection tool(s) proposed by my host site?

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Has my host site distributed the relevant pre-organizational assessment(s)? What's the next step?

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Is there a system already in place for collecting impact data? How will resources offered in the "Impact Data Toolkit" help me develop or enhance a system for collecting impact data?

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What is my timeline for when I will begin putting all the necessary information together before the report is due?

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Am I familiar with the sample data collection/reporting tools provided in the "Impact Data Toolkit" on the VISTA Campus?

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Now that I have a full understanding of the reporting requirements, what additional support do I need?

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## SAMPLE TOOLS FOR COLLECTING & REPORTING IMPACT DATA

The following templates are tools which will enable you to more effectively measure, collect, and report impact data to your supervisors. Knowledge required notes and document previews are included to help you quickly determine which template may best fit your style and skillset. You are encouraged to customize templates to fit your program’s needs, reporting schedule, and unique capacity building activities. The 2016 AmeriCorps VISTA Action Learning Challenge team thanks fellow VISTA Leaders for sharing their project templates.

### MONTHLY VISTA ACTIVITY TRACKER TEMPLATE

Provided by Bryan Diacetis  
 VISTA Leader, City of Memphis  
*Intermediate to Advanced Knowledge of Excel Required*  
[Download this template](#)

The VISTA Activity Tracker (VAT) was designed to serve two key functions 1) help VISTA Leaders and members track metrics and progress on an on-going monthly basis in one document and 2) provide comment sections and Stories of Service (SoS) to capture or explain progress that cannot easily be quantified. The VAT and SoS are built to mirror activities outlined in the VAD and can easily be adapted to fit a specific activity or site. CNCS metrics are also included.

| Assignment Objective |  | Period of Performance | # months or time span                   | Period Covered | Monthly Progress                      |        |        |        |        |        |     |      |      |      |       |
|----------------------|--|-----------------------|---|----------------|---------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-----|------|------|------|-------|
|                      |  |                       |   |                | Enter: Not Done, Working, or Complete |        |        |        |        |        |     |      |      |      |       |
|                      |  |                       |   |                | Step 1                                | Step 2 | Step 3 | Step 4 | Step 5 | Step 6 |     |      |      |      |       |
| Member Activity      |  |                       |   | September      |                                       |        |        |        |        |        |     |      |      |      |       |
| Step 1:              |  |                       |   | October        |                                       |        |        |        |        |        |     |      |      |      |       |
| Step 2:              |  |                       |   | November       |                                       |        |        |        |        |        |     |      |      |      |       |
| Step 3:              |  |                       |   | December       |                                       |        |        |        |        |        |     |      |      |      |       |
| Step 4:              |  |                       |   | January        |                                       |        |        |        |        |        |     |      |      |      |       |
| Step 5:              |  |                       |   | February       |                                       |        |        |        |        |        |     |      |      |      |       |
| Step 6:              |  |                       |   | March          |                                       |        |        |        |        |        |     |      |      |      |       |
|                      |  |                       |   | April          |                                       |        |        |        |        |        |     |      |      |      |       |
|                      |  |                       |   | May            |                                       |        |        |        |        |        |     |      |      |      |       |
|                      |  |                       |   | June           |                                       |        |        |        |        |        |     |      |      |      |       |
|                      |  |                       |   | July           |                                       |        |        |        |        |        |     |      |      |      |       |
|                      |  |                       |   | August         |                                       |        |        |        |        |        |     |      |      |      |       |
| Evidence of Progress |  | Target                | Monthly Progress Toward Activity Target |                |                                       |        |        |        |        |        |     |      |      |      |       |
|                      |  |                       | Sept.                                   | Oct.           | Nov.                                  | Dec.   | Jan.   | Feb.   | March  | April  | May | June | July | Aug. | Total |
|                      |  |                       |   |                |                                       |        |        |        |        |        |     |      |      |      | 0     |
|                      |  |                       |   |                |                                       |        |        |        |        |        |     |      |      |      | 0     |
|                      |  |                       |   |                |                                       |        |        |        |        |        |     |      |      |      | 0     |

### SAMPLE DATA COLLECTION & REPORTING TEMPLATE

*Intermediate to Advanced Knowledge of Excel Required*  
[Download this template](#)

This Excel document was created by members of the ALC team in response to the observation that none of the templates submitted to us by other VISTA Leaders included formulas, so that data collection could automatically be transferred into a report. The document includes three sheets: (1) instructions on how to set up the document for your project, (2) a data collection template, and (3) a report template. With some initial effort, VISTA Leaders or members can use this tool to drastically reduce the time they spend compiling data throughout the year. The style of this template, including the Excel formulas, can be adapted to any of the other tools included in this Toolkit.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| This tool is designed to automatically create a report from a data collection tool, with some |  |
| How to set up this tool   |  |
| For an easy-to-understand introduction to Excel formulas, check out this tutorial.            |  |
| Edit the suggested performance measures to measures specific to your site. Do this by         |  |
| To insert new performance measures, go to the Data Collection tab (found in the bottom        |  |
| To create a formula in the Data Collection tab that will add up results from different weeks, |  |
| To make the sum from Data Collection automatically appear in the Report, click on the cell    |  |

## MONTHLY REPORT TEMPLATE

Provided by Katie Zellmer  
 VISTA Leader, Iowa Campus Compact  
*Basic Knowledge of Excel Required*  
[Download this template](#)

This Excel template includes opportunities for VISTA members to report data related to specific VAD activities, service impact, and member development. Reflection questions regarding challenges and technical assistance needed are also included. Notably, definitions are built into the template to assist members with identifying which data is appropriate to include. This sample can easily be adapted to fit your preferred reporting schedule and site needs.

|                        | # New | # Sustained | Hours |       |
|------------------------|-------|-------------|-------|-------|
| Recruitment/Onboarding |       |             |       | Notes |
| Retention/Development  |       |             |       | Notes |
| Other (Specify)        |       |             |       | Notes |
| Other (Specify)        |       |             |       | Notes |

  

| Volunteer Recruitment/Retention | # Volunteers (New) | # Volunteers (Sustained) | # Hours Served | Notes |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------|-------|
| Total Volunteers                | 0                  | 0                        | 0              |       |
| Student Volunteers              |                    |                          |                |       |
| Economically Disadvantaged      |                    |                          |                |       |
| Other (please specify)          |                    |                          |                |       |

**NOTE:** These KPI goals have been constructed just as an overview. They have chosen these goals and will be able to answer questions on where to find and how to make the data.

**NOTE:** A volunteer can only be counted as "new" or "sustained" in one row. When someone first starts working with you they are "new". The goal is to avoid duplication of volunteer numbers. If the volunteer continues to volunteer with your program over an extended time, the next month they are "sustained". If you are hoping a one-time volunteer event this month and they decide later you have another one the volunteer event count each event separately and all the volunteers are new volunteer for this specific event.

## QUARTERLY TRACKING PLANNED VS. ACTUAL TEMPLATE

Adapted from samples provided by Kelly Langan  
 VISTA Leader, Pennsylvania Campus Compact  
 Katie Zellmer  
 VISTA Leader, Iowa Campus Compact  
*Basic to Intermediate Knowledge of Excel Required*  
[Download this template](#)

(Project Name) AmeriCorps VISTA Program Plan vs Actual Report  
 (Reporting Period Dates)

| Project Output   | Planned Outputs | Actual Outputs | Percentage Met |
|--|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1. # of volunteer recruitment events                                 |                 |                |                |
| 2. # of volunteer management events                                  |                 |                |                |
| 3. # of program activities completed (volunteer training, etc.)      |                 |                |                |
| 4. # of hours contributed by community volunteers (if applicable)    |                 |                |                |
| 5. # of hours contributed by community organizations (if applicable) |                 |                |                |

  

| Project Outcome  | Planned Outcomes | Actual Outcomes | Percentage Met |
|--|------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. # of organizational reporting that identify VISTA as a key resource   |                  |                 |                |
| 2. # of organizational leadership efforts to create a supportive culture |                  |                 |                |
| 3. # of organizational reporting that identify VISTA as a key resource   |                  |                 |                |

  

| Focus Area Output  | Planned Outputs | Actual Outputs | Percentage Met |
|--|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1. # of student organizations that report to support the program |                 |                |                |

  

| Focus Area Outcome  | Planned Outcomes | Actual Outcomes | Percentage Met |
|---|------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. # of students that report to support the program                 |                  |                 |                |
| 2. # of students with improved academic performance (if applicable) |                  |                 |                |
| 3. # of students that report to support the program                 |                  |                 |                |

**VISTA Member please include (name, title/role, sample of presentation you have created during this quarter in brackets) in the narrative text.**

Please answer each of the following questions with at least 1-2 sentences:

1. What accomplishments have you achieved this quarter? (at least 1-2)

2. What were the challenges you faced as a student or community member?

3. How do you think your VISTA experience will contribute to your future success?

This Excel template allows VISTA members to track quarterly outputs and outcomes for the project and focus area(s). This tool will allow VISTA Leaders and members to quickly compile site totals and analyze progress towards planned goals. Narrative questions are also included to provide members the opportunity to reflect on their progress. This sample can easily be adapted to fit your preferred reporting schedule and site needs.



## FAQ FOR VISTA LEADERS

**Q: Where can I find an overview of CNCS Performance Measures?**

A: You will find several helpful resources related to [CNCS Performance Measures](#) in this toolkit. You will also find Performance Measures Instructions at the following link:

[www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ACSN\\_PM\\_Instructions\\_2015\\_NOFO\\_1.pdf](http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ACSN_PM_Instructions_2015_NOFO_1.pdf)

**Q: How can I start reflecting on ways to improve the processes for measuring, collecting, and reporting impact data at my site?**

A: The AmeriCorps VISTA ALC team has created an action guide you may use to review the process for collecting, measuring, and reporting impact data at your site. Check out the [Member Guide for Supporting the Impact Data Process](#) to get started.

**Q: What are the steps to performance measurement?**

A: To review the steps of performance measurement, check out the following link:

[www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/npm/steps-in-performance-measurement.pdf](http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/npm/steps-in-performance-measurement.pdf)

**Q: What are common methods for collecting data?**

A: To review the common methods for collecting data, check out the following link:

[www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/npm/common-methods-for-collecting-data.pdf](http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/npm/common-methods-for-collecting-data.pdf)

**Q: How can I better manage the impact data collecting and reporting timeline at my site?**

A: The AmeriCorps VISTA ALC team has created a suggested timeline to support VISTA Leaders with navigating the impact data process. Check out the [VISTA Leader Collecting and Reporting Impact Data Checklist](#) to get started.

**Q: How can I learn more about collecting high quality impact data?**

A: CNCS has developed several eCourses and supplemental activities to assist VISTA Leaders and members, as well as their supervisors, with the process of collecting and reporting impact data. [Click here](#) to learn more about collecting high quality impact data.

**Q: How can I assist my VISTA team with understanding terms used in CNCS' performance measures and our collecting/reporting templates?**

A: Check out the [Impact Data Toolkit Glossary](#) for a breakdown of important CNCS Performance Measurement terms.

**Q: Where can I find samples of collecting and reporting templates that I may adapt to use at my site?**

A: The AmeriCorps VISTA ALC team, with the support of fellow VISTA Leaders, has compiled six templates for collecting and reporting templates that will help VISTA Leaders and members with collecting and reporting impact data to their supervisors. [Check out Sample Tools for Collecting and Reporting Impact Data here.](#)

**Q: Where can I find a checklist for customizing my own template?**

A: To review a checklist for customizing your own template, check out the following link:

[www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/npm/instrument-formatting-checklist.pdf](http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/npm/instrument-formatting-checklist.pdf)

**Q: I want to call my VISTA team to check in on how they are progressing with the collecting and reporting impact data process.**

A: The AmeriCorps VISTA ALC team has created two action guides VISTA Leaders may use to better support members. The [Leader Self-Assessment Tool for Guiding Members with the Impact Data Process Guide](#) is a great tool to get started. [Checking-in with Members During the Impact Data Process](#) will also provide you with key questions to ask your members prior to the due date of their first report.

**Q: How can the VISTA Impact App help my VISTA team track our service activities?**

A: The VISTA Impact App enables VISTA Leaders and Members to document activities as you go to share with supervisors and support the impact data process. Learn more at the following link:

[www.vistacampus.gov/ameriacorps-vista-impact-app](http://www.vistacampus.gov/ameriacorps-vista-impact-app)

[www.vistacampus.gov/resources/tracking-vista-performance-measures-using-vista-impact-app](http://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/tracking-vista-performance-measures-using-vista-impact-app)

**Q: I have collected impact data from my VISTA team; now what?**

A: Be sure to help highlight and celebrate your VISTA members' impact with your supervisors, organization, and community. You may translate the narrative portion of reports into an article in your newsletter or a blog post on your organization's website. Send VISTA members a shout out on social media, share event pictures and achievements, and thank them for their service regularly. For other ideas, check out Demonstrating the Impact of Service, provided by CNCS, at the following link:

[www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/olc/slides/Demonstrating\\_Impact\\_Service.pdf](http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/olc/slides/Demonstrating_Impact_Service.pdf)

## CNCS PERFORMANCE MEASURES RESOURCES

The following resources will help to provide you with an introduction to Corporation for National & Community Service's (CNCS) performance measures for AmeriCorps VISTA and increase your access to self-paced training resources, step-by-step guides, checklists, and skill building activities. Use these resources as needed to enhance your knowledge and skills related to CNCS performance measures and increase your ability to support fellow VISTA members in collecting, measuring, and reporting impact data to you and supervisor(s).

*Note: Information provided in this resource list is subject to change. Grantees should refer to the performance measure instructions for the grant year in which they were funded.*

### INTRODUCTION TO CNCS PERFORMANCE MEASURES

This section provides a brief introduction to the CNCS' Performance Measurement framework across programs, as well as demonstrates how AmeriCorps VISTA fits within agency-wide measures. The following background resources will support your understanding of how your efforts to measure, collect, and report impact data to your supervisors contribute to the CNCS mission of alleviating poverty. For more information, visit [nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement](https://nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement). For specific AmeriCorps VISTA related performance measures, including focus area aligned outcomes, visit [nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/vista](https://nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/vista).

#### **CNCS Strategic Plan**

The Strategic Plan provides a roadmap for using national service to address critical challenges facing our communities and our nation. The Strategic Plan also includes details on the specific objectives, strategies, and performance measures which determine how AmeriCorps VISTA projects will be evaluated. [nationalservice.gov/about/strategic-plan](https://nationalservice.gov/about/strategic-plan)

#### **CNCS Agency-Wide Priority Measures Chart**

This chart provides a comparative snapshot of agency-wide priority measures to help you identify which priorities are specific to AmeriCorps VISTA programs and members. [nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/cnsc-agency-wide-priority-measures](https://nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/cnsc-agency-wide-priority-measures)

#### **The AmeriCorps VISTA Impact App**

The AmeriCorps VISTA Impact App is designed to help VISTAs in the field track data such as resources donated to an organization, volunteers recruited and managed, veterans and military families served, and staff trained. This data aligns with the performance measures in CNCS' strategic plan. The app is intended to help each VISTA tell a piece of the story about activities at their site. The data tracked through the app will also help inform you, the supervisors, throughout the year of service about what your VISTAs are doing. [vistacampus.gov/ameri-corps-vista-impact-app](https://vistacampus.gov/ameri-corps-vista-impact-app)

## **PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT GUIDES AND CHECKLISTS**

This section provides helpful tools for data collection and analyzing data. Use these guides and checklists when developing and/or strengthening your site's impact data templates.

### **Steps in Performance Measurement**

One-page overview of seven steps in performance measurement.

[nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/npm/steps-in-performance-measurement.pdf](https://nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/npm/steps-in-performance-measurement.pdf)

### **Common Methods for Collecting Data**

Overview of nine common methods used for collecting data including characteristics, advantages, and constraints of each. [nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/npm/common-methods-for-collecting-data.pdf](https://nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/npm/common-methods-for-collecting-data.pdf)

### **Developing Performance Measurement Instruments**

This packet will describe the steps you need to develop your own instrument. Each step includes explanations and examples to help you along the way.

[nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/npm/developing-performance-measurement-instruments.pdf](https://nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/npm/developing-performance-measurement-instruments.pdf)

### **Instrument Formatting Checklist**

Use this checklist as you develop performance measurement instruments for your program and VISTA members.

[nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/npm/instrument-formatting-checklist.pdf](https://nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/npm/instrument-formatting-checklist.pdf)

### **Collecting Performance Measurement Data**

This packet will describe the steps you need to collect meaningful information for performance measurement. Each step includes explanations and examples, including a sample data collection plan and worksheet.

[nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/npm/collecting-performance-measurement-data.pdf](https://nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/npm/collecting-performance-measurement-data.pdf)

### **11 Proven Ways to Improve Data Collection**

[nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/npm/11-proven-ways-to-improve-data-collection.pdf](https://nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/npm/11-proven-ways-to-improve-data-collection.pdf)

### **Analyzing Performance Measurement Data**

This packet will describe the steps you need to analyze simple instruments you use. Each step includes explanations and examples. Includes a practice worksheet, a blank survey for you to practice, and a glossary.

[nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/npm/analyzing-performance-measurement-data.pdf](https://nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/npm/analyzing-performance-measurement-data.pdf)

## **PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT CORE CURRICULUM**

The following material has been developed to help grantees, sub-grantees and sponsors understand the CNCS performance measures. Except where noted otherwise, this material can be used with sub-grantees, grantees and sponsors of AmeriCorps State and National, Senior Corps, and AmeriCorps VISTA. Self-paced tutorials, PowerPoint slides, skill building activities, and step-by-step checklists are included.

VISTA Leaders are encouraged to share the following resources with their site supervisors and/or adapt and use activities “as is” to support fellow VISTA members in collecting and reporting impact data.  
[nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/training-resources#DateCollections](https://nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/training-resources#DateCollections)

### **SELF-PACED TUTORIALS:**

#### **How to Use the CNCS National Performance Measurement Instructions (eCourse)**

This module will be helpful for award recipients and applicants that are considering or are required to use the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) national performance measures. This course is approximately 17 minutes.

[nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/how-use-cnsc-national-performance-measure-instructions](https://nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/how-use-cnsc-national-performance-measure-instructions)

#### **Overview of Performance Measurement (eCourse) – PowerPoint (PDF) (PPT)**

This module supports learners in understanding the “what” and “why” of performance measurement, and CNCS Agency-wide Priority Measures. This is the first course in the Performance Measurement Core Curriculum series. This course can be completed at your own pace.

[nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/overview-performance-measurement](https://nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/overview-performance-measurement)

#### **Designing Effective Action for Change (eCourse) – PowerPoint (PDF) (PPT)**

This module is designed to give you an overview of Theory of Change while helping you understand elements needed to construct a Theory of Change and how it forms program design. This course is the second in the Performance Measurement Core Curriculum series. This course can be completed at your own pace. [nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/designing-effective-action-change](https://nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/designing-effective-action-change)

#### **Building Evidence of Effectiveness (eCourse) – PowerPoint (PDF) (PPT)**

This module demonstrates how to effectively use data to document community need and to support the choice of program intervention. This course is the third in the Performance Measurement Core Curriculum Series. This course can be completed at your own pace.

[nationalservice.gov/resources/ameriCorps/building-evidence-effectiveness](https://nationalservice.gov/resources/ameriCorps/building-evidence-effectiveness)

#### **High Quality Performance Measures (eCourse) – PowerPoint (PDF) (PPT)**

This module supports learners in understanding alignment of performance measures with the Theory of Change; the key criteria for high quality outcomes and the elements of strong aligned sets of outputs and outcomes. This course is the fourth in the Performance Measurement Core Curriculum series. This course can be completed at your own pace.

[nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/high-quality-performance-measurement](https://nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/high-quality-performance-measurement)

**Collecting High Quality Outcome Data, Part 1 (eCourse) – PowerPoint (PDF) (PPT)**

This module will help you recognize the benefits of collecting high-quality data, use your theory of change to think about measurement, identify and evaluate the merits of various data sources and instruments, and understand appropriate uses for common data collection methods. This course is the fifth in the Performance Measurement Core Curriculum Series. This course can be completed at your own pace.

[nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/collecting-high-quality-outcome-data-part-1](https://nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/collecting-high-quality-outcome-data-part-1)

**Collecting High Quality Outcome Data, Part 2 (eCourse) – PowerPoint (PDF)(PPT)**

This module includes information on the steps to implement data collection, including developing a data collection schedule, training data collectors, and pilot testing instrument. You will also learn how to recognize data quality as it relates to reliability, validity, and minimizing sources of bias. This course is the sixth in the Performance Measurement Core Curriculum Series. This course can be completed at your own pace.

[nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/collecting-high-quality-outcome-data-part-2](https://nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/collecting-high-quality-outcome-data-part-2)

**Demonstrating the Impact of Service (eCourse) – PowerPoint (PDF) (PPT)**

This course describes ways in which CNCS and grantees collect and disseminate information that showcases national service; encourages grantees to build strong story building skills, collect photos, and compile clear and compelling performance data. This course can be completed at your own pace.

[nationalservice.gov/resources/amicorps/demonstrating-impact-service](https://nationalservice.gov/resources/amicorps/demonstrating-impact-service)

# IMPACT DATA GLOSSARY

## GLOSSARY INTRODUCTION

The Impact Data Glossary is comprised of terms and definitions that the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) provides as instructions to effectively and accurately measure the impact of your VISTA project. The terms and definitions fall within each of the six focus areas: Education, Economic Opportunity, Veterans and Military Families, Healthy Futures, Environmental Stewardship, and Disaster Preparedness and Recovery, as well as the general Capacity Building terms and definitions.

CNCS-specific definitions for terms such as “output,” “outcome,” “volunteer managed,” “volunteers recruited,” “training,” etc. can be found in the general Capacity Building section of the glossary. After that, the glossary is divided by project focus area. Additionally, terms have been grouped together for convenience; for example: “Healthy Futures” projects may or may not focus on both healthcare and/or food security. Hence, “Healthy Futures” is separated based on “healthcare” and “food security.” For “Economic Opportunity” projects, terms and definitions have been grouped to reflect relationship. For example, terms that fall under “college/university/secondary education,” “financial empowerment,” “housing,” and “job readiness” have been categorized to reflect such relationships.

## GENERAL CAPACITY BUILDING

In this section you will find helpful definitions to some of CNCS’ “capacity building” terms as they relate to the overall goals of your VISTA project in its effort to promote organizational and/or programmatic sustainability. For additional support/resources, visit the National Service website ([www.nationalservice.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov)).

**Performance Measurement:** regular measurement of the results (**outcomes**) and efficiency of services delivered or programs developed (**outputs**).<sup>1</sup>

**Capacity Building:** A set of activities that expand and/or lead to the **enhancement** of a program’s or organization’s scale, reach, **efficiency**, or **effectiveness** of. Activities may also **leverage resources** for programs and/or organizations. These activities achieve lasting positive outcomes for the beneficiary populations served by host site.

- **Effectiveness:** Improved ability of the organization to achieve outcomes resulting in better success rates or better quality of outcomes achieved.
- **Efficiency:** Improved outcomes with the same level of resources; improved or consistent quality of services with fewer resources.
- **Enhancement:** New features and functions or significant improvements made to existing systems or processes that improve efficiency and productivity or provide new capabilities that were not previously possible in support of the program delivery model.
- **Leveraged Resources:** Leveraging resources combines existing and new resources and/or capacity building activities (such as funding, volunteers, in-kind support, and partnerships) to accomplish a goal, promote growth, and make more from what is available.

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<sup>1</sup> Hatry, Harry P. “The Scope of Performance Measurement,” *Performance Measurement*, sec. ed., 2006, pp. 3.

**Community Assessment:** Involves comprehensive information gathering, analysis and documentation to understand a community's concerns, effectively characterize its needs and respond with appropriate interventions. This may be accomplished through interviews with community members, and by conducting listening sessions, public forums, and other place-based research, resulting in an assessment (or profile) of the community that helps identify and prioritize critical issues and plan future interventions.

**Community Volunteers:** Members of the community who offer time, knowledge, skills, and expertise for free to support the VISTA's project. Community volunteers differ from VISTAs in that they are under no formal obligation to provide a specified amount of assistance and are not enrolled in a national service program.

- **Volunteers Recruited:** Enlisted or enrolled as a direct result of an intentional effort to do so. Recruited volunteers are those who were directly brought on through the efforts of the VISTA member to aid in service delivery and/or program development.
- **Volunteer Managed:** Includes training, direction, coordination and supervision of the community volunteer by the host site or the VISTA in tasks, duties and services for the intended purpose of supporting or enhancing the program delivery model. Managed volunteers are those who existed at the host site prior to the VISTA member's arrival and are now inherited by the VISTA member to enhance service delivery or program development.
- **Hours of service:** Consists of all the hours that "recruited" and "managed" community volunteers devote to serving, including training time that they may have to participate in. Does not include hours served by community volunteers engaged in prohibited activities for host site, such as community organizing intended to promote advocacy activities.

**Monitor progress:** Having a systematic process for collecting data and tracking outputs and outcomes related to goals and recommendations identified in the assessment.

**National service participant:** The VISTA Member.

- **Outcomes:** Events, occurrences, or conditions that demonstrate *change* as a result of services provided. E.g. economically disadvantaged individuals with improved financial knowledge as a result of financial literacy services provided.
- **Outputs:** People served, products created, services delivered, or programs developed. E.g. economically disadvantaged individuals receiving financial literacy services.

**Training:** An organized activity aimed at imparting information and/or instructions to improve the recipient's performance or to help him or her attain a required level of knowledge or skill.

**Underserved Populations:** Populations that are specifically identified as in need of program services or that currently receive inadequate service.

**Additional activities/program outputs:** Can include any capacity building activities or outputs that have been completed or produced, such as the number of community outreach meetings coordinated, communication tools developed, manuals written, trainings piloted, etc., which is more than what the organization could have completed or produced absent the capacity building services.

**Types of service:** includes qualitatively distinct service activities that enable the program to address different needs or different populations in need of the organization's services.

**Cash resources:** Cash, check, or other monetary gift.

**In-kind resources:** Non-cash contributions, including donated goods or services, expert advice, equipment or property.

**New beneficiaries:** Individuals who were clients or service recipients in the current reporting period who were not clients or service recipients in previous reporting periods.

**Sustainable Partnerships:** Collaborative relationships to open doors for new projects, new funding, new clients and volunteers.

## **DOES YOUR PROJECT WORK ON DISASTER SERVICES?**

If your project's focus is mainly on Disaster Service: Preparedness and Recovery, you will find the relevant definitions of common terms that are used to accurately capture the work being done. Definitions for terms such as preparedness, recovery, response, etc. can be found below. For additional support/resources, visit the National Service website ([www.nationalservice.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov)).

**CNCS-supported services:** Could be a variety of different kinds of supports to help the individuals have a higher quality of life, but cannot only be referrals to federal services without supplementary assistance. The assistance may be delivered by phone, e-mail, or in person. It may be delivered individually or as a group.

**Mitigation:** Activities providing a critical foundation in the effort to reduce the loss of life and property from natural and/or manmade disasters.

**Preparedness:** The process of identifying the personnel, training, and equipment needed for a wide range of potential incidents, and developing jurisdiction-specific plans for delivering capabilities when needed for an incident.

**Recovery:** The development, coordination, and execution of service- and site-restoration plans; the reconstitution of government operations and services; individual, private-sector, nongovernmental, and public-assistance programs to provide housing and to promote restoration; long-term care and treatment of affected persons; additional measures for social, political, environmental, and economic restoration; evaluation of the incident to identify lessons learned; post-incident reporting; and development of initiatives to mitigate the effects of future incidents.

**Response:** Immediate actions to save lives, protect property and the environment, and meet basic human needs. Response also includes the execution of emergency plans and actions to support short-term recovery.

## DOES YOUR PROJECT FOCUS ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY?

The primary focus of this section is to provide definition to the CNCS-specific “economic opportunity” terms. You will be able to find CNCS-defined terms such as “economically disadvantaged,” “improved knowledge,” “low-income,” etc. The definitions are provided below to support your efforts in accurately capture your efforts based on how CNCS defines a particular measure. For additional support/resources, visit the National Service website ([www.nationalservice.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov)).

**Economically disadvantaged:** Must be receiving or meet the income eligibility requirements to receive: TANF, Food Stamps (SNAP), Medicaid, SCHIP, Section 8 housing assistance OR have a poor credit score OR are at least 60 days behind on one or more personal/family accounts.’

**Low-income:** Must be receiving or meet the income eligibility requirements to receive: TANF, Food Stamps (SNAP), Medicaid, SCHIP, Section 8 housing assistance OR have a poor credit score OR are at least 60 days behind on one or more personal/family accounts.

**People with disabilities:** Subset of individuals and families that meets a definition related to inability to live independently without support. Separate mention in this measure may not be needed, but could leave it in and count units for people with disabilities separately to acknowledge emphasis on this population.

### SECONDARY EDUCATION

**College:** Refers to colleges, universities, and technical and vocational schools (definition of college per US Census).

**Register for a college course:** May have registered or enrolled in course during term of service or within 30 days after term of service ends. If student registered during the term of service, the student did not drop out and did not take an “incomplete.”

### FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT

**Financial literacy services:** Includes “financial literacy education with regard to credit management, financial institutions including banks and credit unions, and utilization of savings plans” (2009 Serve America Act).

**Improved Financial Knowledge:** Should be based on pre-defined learning objectives.

### HOUSING

**Homeless:** Individuals who spend the night in a place not intended for human habitation, in an emergency shelter, or in a transitional housing facility.

**Housing services:** Helps qualifying individuals find appropriate housing, find the resources to support use of appropriate housing, and assists individuals in accessing the appropriate housing. May or may not result in an actual placement. May also include development and repair activities.

**Housing unit:** A single-family home (including a mobile home if permanently placed), an apartment, or a room in a group home for people with disabilities.

**Safe, healthy, affordable housing:** Family or individual moves into a housing unit with secure tenure (lease or ownership document). Grantee certifies that the housing is safe and healthy, based on an inspection or other documentation. Grantee defines affordability and certifies that the housing unit is affordable to the household.

**Otherwise made available:** Activities that make available through improved access a housing unit that is in the housing stock and likely to remain habitable. For example, assistance in searching for the unit, a rent subsidy that makes the unit affordable to the individual or family.

**Repair:** A more modest level of physical work on the unit, such as weatherizing, painting, replacing appliances and removing safety hazards.

**Develop:** Build new or substantially rehabilitate housing units that were uninhabitable or soon would have become so. Involves replacing major systems such as the roof, the plumbing, the wiring, the foundation, or elevating the unit as required by a flood plain standard.

### **JOB READINESS**

**Job placement services:** These services include job search assistance (including career counseling); labor market information (which identifies job vacancies; skills needed for in-demand jobs; and local, regional and national employment trends); initial assessment of skills and needs; information about available services.

**Placed in jobs:** individual is hired in a new job as a result of job placement services provided; individual may have been previously working in a different job or previously unemployed.

**Job training:** Occupational skill training delivered in an institutional or classroom setting or in an experiential workplace setting. Includes job training that results in obtaining a state or union certification in a skilled trade. Also called “on-the-job training” or “work experience.”

**Securing employment:** Refers to paid, regular employment or serving in the military/national guard within the past week.

### **DOES YOUR PROJECT FOCUS ON EDUCATION?**

In this section, you will find definitions for some of the key terms and phrases that the Corporation for National and Community Service provides in support of your Performance Measures. You’ll find definitions for terms such as “disadvantaged youth,” “economically disadvantaged,” “improved academic engagement,” “high need,” etc. The terms and definitions in this section should increase your efforts to effectively measure, collect and report on your respect performance measure, per CNCS’s definitions. For additional support/resources, visit the National Service website ([www.nationalservice.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov)).

**Children:** Individuals younger than the age of kindergarten enrollment.

**Completed participation:** In the approved grant application, the program should indicate how much time (i.e. how many days or hours) is required in order to complete the activity. Then they will only count the number of children who meet that threshold by the end of the program or activity. This number will be used as the denominator for selected measures and therefore the amount of participation should be enough to influence the results.

**Disadvantaged youth:** Includes those youth who are economically disadvantaged and 1 or more of the following: (A) Who are out-of-school youth, including those who are unemployed. (B) Who are in or aging out of foster care. (C) Who have limited English proficiency. (D) Who are homeless or who have run away from home. (E) Who are at-risk to leave secondary school without a diploma. (F) Who are former juvenile offenders or at risk of delinquency. (G) Who are individuals with disabilities (From SAA). It is the grantee's responsibility to ensure the beneficiaries of service meet the eligibility requirements provided in the definition.

**Early childhood education program:** A program in which CNCS-supported activities help pre-K children maintain enrollment in and succeed in early childhood education. The 'help' that grantees provide does not need to be in direct service to the children. However, the CNCS-supported activities must provide direct support that makes the program possible.

**Economically disadvantaged:** Eligible for free (at or below 130% of poverty) or reduced (between 130% to 185% of poverty) lunch or enrolled in a school where the majority of students are eligible for free or reduced lunch; may or may not actually be accessing free/reduced lunch.

**Education program:** A program in which CNCS-supported activities help students maintain enrollment in and succeed in school (except mentoring programs). The help that grantees provide does not need to be in direct service to the students. However, the CNCS-supported activities must provide direct support that makes the program possible.

**Enrolled in an early childhood education center where the majority of children are eligible for free or reduced lunch:** Grantees using this option to document economic disadvantage must demonstrate that the sites/early childhood centers they will engage already have a population in which the largest percentage of children in the center come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, or explain an outreach strategy to increase the proportions of economically disadvantaged children served by the CNCS-sponsored program.

**Enrolled in a school where the majority of students are eligible for free or reduced lunch:** Grantees using this option to document economic disadvantage must demonstrate that the sites/schools they will engage already have a student population in which the largest percentage of students in the school come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, or explain an outreach strategy to increase the proportions of economically disadvantaged students in the program.

**Entering:** means matriculating as a full-time or part-time student.

**High need:** Any school that meets the definitions outlined in the Race to the Top Notice of Funding Opportunity (CFDA #:84.395A) for High Poverty School or Persistently Low Achieving School.

<http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2009/pdf/E9-27427.pdf>.

**Improved academic performance in literacy and/or math:** as measured by an improved demonstration of skill/knowledge at post-test as compared to pre-test (gain score) using a standardized test/instrument.

**Improved academic engagement:** A positive and significant change in one of the following student attitudes over a specified period of time: increased interest in school, improved perspective on school climate, increased attachment to school, and increased educational aspirations.

**Students:** Individuals younger than 21 years of age who are enrolled or eligible for enrollment in grades K-12.

**Youth:** Individuals younger than 21 years of age.

**Special or exceptional needs:** Refers to students or youth who are developmentally disabled; students who are abused or neglected; in need of foster care; adjudicated youth; homeless youth; teenage parents; and children in need of protective intervention in their homes.

**Literacy:** includes English, language arts, and/or reading.

**Literacy skills:** An indicator and element of school readiness that measures a child's development in one or more of the following domains: phonological awareness, book knowledge and appreciation, print awareness and concepts, early writing, and alphabet knowledge. Each domain of literacy skills development has a set of specific, measurable indicators. The applicant/grantee should identify at the outset those specific domain(s) and indicator(s) of literacy skills development that (a) directly corresponds to the program intervention and (b) will be measured by the particular standardized data collection instrument you choose.

**Mentors:** adults who provide CNCS-sustained support to children or youth through either community-based programs or school-based programs. Programs that involve peer-to-peer support should not be included in this measure--for those programs use tutoring measures.

**Numeracy skills:** An indicator of school readiness that measures a child's development in one or more of the following domains: numbers and operations, geometry and special sense, and pattern and measurement. Each domain of math (numeracy) skills development has a set of specific, measurable indicators. The applicant/grantee should identify at the outset those specific domain(s) and indicator(s) of math (numeracy) skills development that (a) directly corresponds to the program intervention and (b) will be measured as defined by the particular standardized data collection instrument you choose.

**On Time:** Graduating high school on time: within 4 years of starting 9th grade.

**Post-secondary institutions:** may include two-year and four-year colleges.

**Remaining in the education field:** classroom teachers, school support staff, school administration, district administration policy, education non-profits, state, local or federal government positions in the field of education or other positions whose primary objective is to facilitate learning among K-12 students.

**Service learning:** Service-learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.

**School readiness:** Preparation for Kindergarten which includes multiple indicators assessed across multiple developmental and behavioral domains including but not limited to physical well-being, health and motor development, social and emotional development, approaches to learning, language development, cognitive development, and age-appropriate academic skills and behavior.

**Social and emotional development:** An indicator and element of school readiness that measures a child's development in one or more of the following domains: self-concept, self-control, cooperation, social relationships, and knowledge of families and communities. Each domain of social and emotional development has a set of specific, measurable indicators. The applicant/grantee should identify at the outset those specific domain(s) and indicator(s) of social and emotional development that (a) directly corresponds to the program intervention and (b) will be measured by the particular standardized data collection instrument you choose.

**Standardized test/instrument:** Has been validated externally on a randomly-selected population of students.

## **DOES YOUR PROJECT FOCUS ON ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP?**

The Corporation for National and Community Service has a set definition for how it defines terms and phrases such as “green jobs,” improved energy efficiency,” etc. If your project's focus is on Environmental Stewardship, the key terms and definitions provided in this section should provide support in respect to how you should appropriately capture the impact of your work. For additional support/resources, visit the National Service website ([www.nationalservice.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov)).

**Change in behavior or Intent to change behavior:** Individuals outlining actionable steps they will take or currently taking as a result of the educational event.

**Constructed:** Making new trails available by implementing safety measures, making handicapped accessible, or environmental protection measures such as boardwalks, grading, trail-blazing, converting a railroad bed to a trail, etc. that make trails newly available.

**Education or Training:** May be one-time or an on-going series; cannot just be distribution of pamphlets or information available on a web-site; should have learning objectives; may be in person or through a web-based interface.

**Energy Audit:** See U.S. Dept. of Energy information for suggested definition <http://www.waptac.org/>.

**Environmental Stewardship and/or environmentally conscious practices:** Organized efforts to teach about how natural environments function and, particularly, how human beings can manage their behavior and ecosystems in order to live sustainably. Environmental topics should relate to real conditions in the community being served.

**Green Jobs:** Jobs that contribute substantially to preserving or restoring environmental quality, including jobs that help to protect ecosystems and biodiversity; reduce energy, materials, and water consumption through high efficiency strategies; de-carbonize the economy; and minimize or altogether avoid generation of all forms of waste and pollution.

**Housing Unit:** single family home, mobile home, apartment unit, each side of duplex would count as 1.

**Improve energy efficiency:** Physical improvements to housing or building structures that improve energy-efficiency compared to standard new units built to local building code or the unit's existing energy efficiency, respectively.

**Improved:** Renovated to reduce human impact or the negative impact of natural disasters or invasive species, restore native plants and habitat, reduced erosion, protected watersheds, reduced wildfire risk, upgraded or repaired outdoor recreation facilities or signage, increased public safe access, protected flora and fauna. Improvement should be consistent with an accepted natural resource restoration, maintenance or improvement plan.

**Low income:** 200% of poverty or the updated level as found at: <http://www.waptac.org/>.

**Placed in jobs:** An individual is hired in a green job as a result of job skills training and/or certification provided; the AmeriCorps member may have been previously working in a different job or previously unemployed.

**Put into use:** Established safe and useable trails or waterways.

**Recycled:** The collected materials will be reused in some form and not disposed of. Your program may deliver them to a reputable recycling site or may recycle the materials directly; recycling includes a variety of techniques including composting, re-using, and take back programs in addition to programs typically called recycling. The program needs to verify that there are contracts for the sale or transfer of materials to a processor for reuse or an end user.

**Retrofit:** An energy conservation measure applied to an existing building or the action of improving the thermal performance or maintenance of a building.

**Structures:** Shelters, such as homeless shelters or emergency shelters operated by nonprofit or public organizations; government-owned buildings.

**Treated:** Removed invasive species, planted native plants, built riparian buffers, cleared of natural debris (such as fallen trees/limbs, hazardous fuel) and unnatural debris (such as disaster debris and improperly disposed waste). Treatment must go beyond basic trash removal.

**Waterways:** Includes rivers, lakes and other bodies of water on or abutting public land.

**Weatherization:** Modifying a building to reduce energy consumption and costs and optimize energy efficiency. Whole-house weatherization includes the installation of modern energy-saving heating and cooling equipment and looks at how the house performs as a system.

## **DOES YOUR PROJECT FOCUS ON HEALTHY FUTURES?**

If your VISTA project's main focus is on sustaining the health and well-being of its clients/constituents, you will find all the relevant definitions to both familiar and unfamiliar terms that will support you in your efforts to effectively measure, collect, and report on your work. Information about the types of services that qualify as "healthy futures" such as "food security," "access to healthcare and health services," "persons with disability," etc. can be found in this specific location. For additional support/resources, visit the National Service website ([www.nationalservice.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov)).

**Older Adults:** Individuals age 65 or older.

**Social ties/perceived social support:** Relationships with other people and/or the belief that these people will offer (or have offered) effective help during times of need.

**Live independently:** Individuals live in a private residence (house, apartment, mobile home, etc.) rather than in a nursing home or group home.

**Individual with a Disability:** An individual who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; has a record of such impairment; or is regarded as having such impairment.

### **FOOD SECURITY**

**Food security:** Access at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members. Food security includes at a minimum: (1) the ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, and (2) an assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (e.g., without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing, or other coping strategies).

**Long-term hunger:** Refers to the USDA's definition of "low food security" or "very low food security."

**Emergency food:** "Emergency" food assistance is not meant to designate routine help in meeting a family's needs. The emergency may be experienced by the family personally, such as their house burning down, or it may be experienced by the community more broadly, such as a natural disaster.

**Receiving food, transportation, or other services:** Individual should receive the support needed to maintain independent living; not all individuals will require the same support; may include food deliveries, legal and medical services, nutrition information, transportation, etc.

**Support, services, education, or referrals:** Helps qualifying individuals access food, provides nutritional services, education and life skills to alleviate the food insecurity experienced by the individual/family. May include community garden programs.

### **HEALTH**

**Clinic:** Any medical facility or establishment where medical services are provided, and where more than one medical specialty is practiced. This may include public health clinics, hospitals, etc.

**Medically underserved:** An individual who lives in a medically underserved area or is a member of a medically underserved population, as defined by Human Health Services. The criteria for these designations include indicators of health status, ability to pay for and access to health services, and availability of health professionals.

**Enrolled:** Newly enrolled as a result of grantee activities. Clients may or may not have existing health insurance, or previous use of health services and health benefits programs.

**Primary health care:** Both a level of health service delivery and an approach to health care practice. Primary care, as the provision of essential health care, is the basis of a health care system. This is in contrast to secondary health care, which is consultative, short term, and disease oriented for the purpose of assisting the primary care practitioner.

**Healthcare services:** Accessible, comprehensive, continuous, and coordinated care to preserve health and prevent, treat or manage disease or infirmity, provided and consistently available in the context of family and community.

**Health education program:** Any planned combination of learning experiences designed to predispose, enable, and reinforce voluntary behavior conducive to health in individuals, groups or communities.

**Preventive health care services:** Any activity undertaken by an individual who (believed to be) healthy for the purpose of preventing or detecting illness in an asymptomatic state.

**Uninsured:** An individual lacks insurance coverage

## **DOES YOUR PROJECT SERVE VETERANS, VETERAN FAMILIES, ACTIVE DUTY MEMBERS, AND/OR ACTIVE MILITARY FAMILIES?**

The section is dedicated to VISTA projects and programs that specifically serve Active Military and Veteran Families. Here, you will find all the relevant definition to key terms to increase your efforts in effectively measuring, collecting and reporting on your work with Active Military and Veterans Families. Information for active military and veterans services, such as supported assistance, who is considered a military/veteran family can be found in this section. For additional support/resources, visit the National Service website ([www.nationalservice.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov)).

**Active duty military service member:** Full-time duty in the active military service of the United States, including the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. This includes members of the Reserve Component serving on active duty or full-time training duty, but does not include full-time National Guard duty.

**CNCS-supported assistance:** A variety of different supports that enhance the quality of life of veterans, military members, and their families, including:

- Coordinate community needs for military families during pre-deployment, deployment, and reintegration.
- Promote community-based efforts to meet the unique needs of military families while a family member is deployed and upon that family member's return home.
- Recruit veterans for national service and volunteer opportunities, including opportunities that utilize their military experience, such as disaster response projects.

- Assist veterans with access to educational benefits and services.
- Develop educational opportunities for veterans, including opportunities for professional certification, licensure, or other credentials.
- Coordinate activities with and assist State and local agencies that provide veterans with educational benefits.
- Assist veterans with access to employment benefits and services.
- Coordinate activities with and assist agencies that serve veterans and military families with internships and fellowships that may lead to employment in the private and public sectors.
- Assist veterans and active-duty military to access state and federal benefits.
- Promote efforts within a community to serve the needs of veterans and active-duty military.
- Assist veterans to file benefits claims.
- Mentor military children.
- Develop mentoring relationships between veterans and economically disadvantaged students.
- Assist veterans with transportation.
- Develop projects to assist veterans with disabilities, veterans who are unemployed, older veterans, and veterans in rural communities with transportation and other supportive services.
- Provide veterans with legal assistance, assistance accessing mental health care, and assistance accessing affordable housing.

**Military family:** Immediate family members related by blood, marriage, or adoption to a current member of the U.S. armed forces.

**Veteran:** A person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable.

**Veteran family:** Immediate family members related by blood, marriage, or adoption to a veteran of the U.S. armed forces, including one who is deceased.