

VISTA ... A Legacy of Service



SUPERVISORS ORIENTATION

Fall 2013



VISTA
Volunteers In Service To America

Supervisors Orientation Workbook

Fall 2013

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Mission and Legacy

Corporation for National and Community Service Mission Statement

The Corporation's mission is to provide opportunities for Americans of all ages and backgrounds to engage in service that addresses the nation's educational, public safety, environmental, and other human needs to achieve direct and demonstrable results and to encourage all Americans to engage in such service. In doing so, the Corporation will foster civic responsibility, strengthen the ties that bind us together as a people, and provide educational opportunity for those who make a substantial commitment to service.

VISTA Mission and Legacy

VISTA builds capacity in nonprofit organizations and communities to help bring individuals and communities out of poverty.

For over 45 years, VISTA has been helping bring communities and individuals out of poverty. Today, nearly 6,000 VISTA members serve in hundreds of nonprofit organizations and public agencies throughout the country — working to promote literacy, improve health services, create businesses, increase housing opportunities, or bridge the digital divide.

Goals of VISTA Supervisors Orientation

By the end of the Supervisors Orientation, Supervisors will be able to:

- Describe the VISTA program and its mission in broad terms
- Gain a better understanding of their role as VISTA Supervisors
- Share learnings with sub-site supervisors so that they are able to support their VISTAs to the best of their capacity
- Support VISTAs in their role as capacity builders within their sponsoring organizations
- Articulate how their VISTA project fits in the context of the National Service network
- Locate key resources and contacts within VISTA to facilitate successful reporting and communication between the sponsoring organization and the State Office
- Define and develop a clear, realistic VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)
- Identify the diverse characteristics of the VISTA population
- Effectively recruit, interview and screen VISTA members
- Design and implement an effective On-Site Orientation and Training (OSOT) for the incoming VISTA member(s), and (if applicable) training for sub-site supervisors
- Build and strengthen relationships with VISTAs that result in retention and successful completion of project tasks
- Communicate the Corporation's policies and where to find resources related to equal opportunity, civil rights, discrimination, and sexual harassment

VISTA Impact Facts

Since 1965, over 190,000 people have served as VISTA volunteers working with local organizations to strengthen communities and help people escape poverty.

In 2012, VISTAs helped raise \$170.1 million in funds and in-kind contributions for anti-poverty efforts.

In 2012, 8,165 VISTAs served with 1,132 anti-poverty programs.

In 2012, VISTAs mobilized 1.1 million community volunteers who served a total of 11.7 million hours.

Additionally, in FY 2012:

- 2.5 million disadvantaged youth were served.
- 115,000 veterans and military family members were served.
- 12,610 veterans and military family members were engaged as community volunteers.

Eighty percent of former VISTA members continue to volunteer in their communities after their term of service ends.

PSO: “Questions to Ask My Supervisor”

During the Pre-Service Orientation (PSO), VISTA members are encouraged to start a list of questions for their supervisors. Certain sessions in the PSO prompt them to record thoughts and questions for their supervisors in their VISTA Notebooks. They are advised to ask these questions during the Onsite Orientation and Training (OSOT) they receive during their first week on site.

The following is a list of questions that VISTAs may ask you during OSOT:

- Is this a single site or multi-site project?
- If multi-site, who is the site supervisor and who is the overall VISTA project supervisor?
- What year is the VISTA project in?
- What is the history of this VISTA project?
- How many VISTAs are serving on this project?
- Can I see the project plan?
- Are the goals in the project plan for one VISTA or multiple VISTAs?
- What are my reporting responsibilities and expectations for collecting data?
- Is there a timeline or strategies developed for VAD?
- What is the mission of my sponsoring organization?
- Is there a theory of change that underlies that mission?
- How does this VISTA project fit into the community?
- In what ways is our project going to empower the community?
- How does our project build capacity?
- What does the organization’s current volunteer capacity look like?
- How ready are we to recruit and involve volunteers?
- What is the organization’s history using volunteers?
- What role do volunteers currently play within the organization?

PSO: “Questions to Ask My Supervisor” (cont.)

- Does the organization already have:
 - a budget for managing volunteers?
 - a paid volunteer manager or person assigned to work with volunteers on staff?
 - volunteer management policies and procedures?
 - a recruitment plan and materials, including an agency web site?
 - a volunteer database?

- What is the organization’s history of resource mobilization? (What has the organization done to mobilize resources?)

- Is there a database of community resources that have been approached already (including what they donated and when)?

- What are the organization’s partnerships (past and present)?

- What has worked (and not worked) in building relationships with the community?

- What is the dominant communication style in the organization?

- How would you describe your communication style?

At PSO, VISTAs are prompted to consider what their personal and professional goals are for the next year; they may ask you questions about how their work will support their goals. They may also identify training, skills and other support they need to successfully complete their VADs.

“Welcome Wall” Project

How and Why?

A year of national service is important not only in the life of the individuals who apply to serve as VISTA members, but also for our organizations, communities, and country. The year begins when a VISTA member takes the oath of service during the swearing-in ceremony. At an early pilot of the current PSO curriculum, the supervisors who were attending a VISTA supervisors' training event that was co-located with the PSO were asked to help with the swearing-in ceremony. This was accomplished with their thoughts, expressions of hope, well wishes, artistry, and creativity.

The “Welcome Wall” canvas mural was paraded in at the beginning of the closing ceremony. It was colorful, spirited, and beautiful. The collage that hung from a dowel was approximately 10' by 8' and was completed by all of the supervisors who had attended. In making the presentation at the closing, three supervisors briefly spoke to the VISTA members on behalf of all supervisors. Their words conveyed excitement, inspiration, appreciation, and commitment. It was quite a wonderful way to help launch the year of service.

Supervisor involvement with the PSO and the VISTA swearing-in ceremony is a new and much welcomed effort. Supervisors are critical partners. While your VISTA members may not be attending this PSO, we have an opportunity to represent supervisors as a group in a rich and symbolic way.

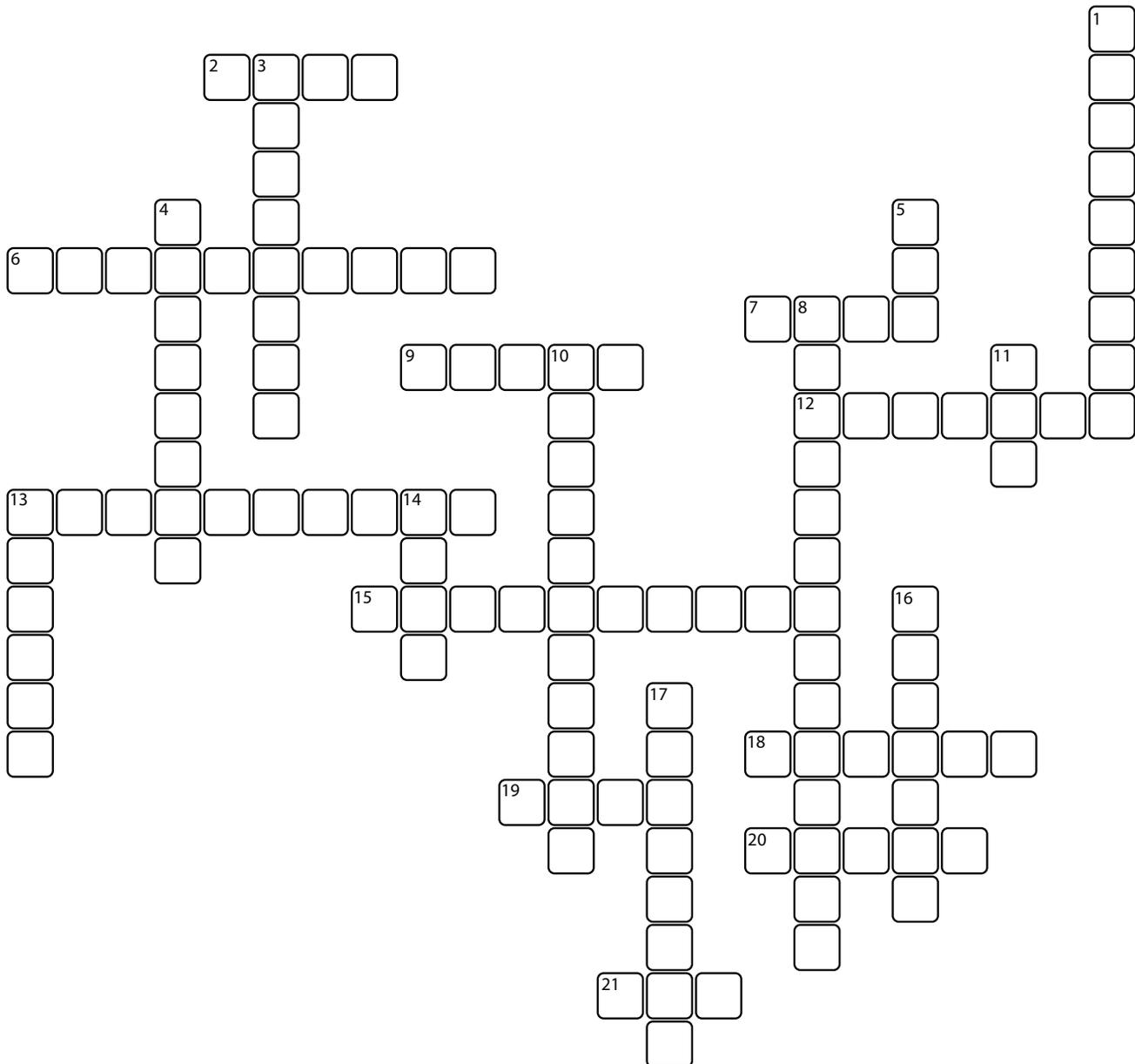
How?

- ▶ Use the collection of art materials we've gathered to craft a “Welcome Wall” that will be used to welcome the VISTA members to their year of service. You'll find markers, pipe cleaners, beads, feathers, etc. Let your imagination go! Make sure every supervisor makes a contribution to the project.
- ▶ Work together to decide as a group how the first five minutes of the closing ceremony will be used to present the “Wall.”

*On behalf of all partners in national service,
thank you for putting forth this effort!*

VISTA Supervisor Crossword Puzzle

Supervisor Roles



Across

2. Full-time residential national service program for youth 18-24.
6. National service program that meets real community needs through direct service.
7. Abbreviation for program where volunteers are 55 or older and want to make a difference in their communities
9. The program that combines classroom subjects with service is _____ and Serve.

VISTA Supervisor Crossword Puzzle (cont.)

12. What the organization receiving a VISTA member is called.
13. A person critical to the success of a national service participant.
15. The organization in each state that manages AmeriCorps State programs is the State _____.
18. The act of providing services to the identified recipients of clients of a program is _____ service.
19. Abbreviation for the federal agency that manages national service programs.
20. Oldest national service program. Focus is on moving people out of poverty.
21. Abbreviation for program where volunteers are 60 or older and help adults with special needs remain independant

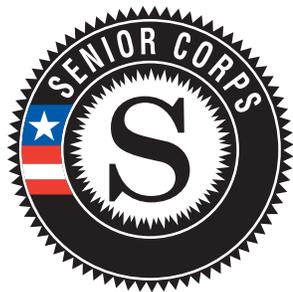
Down

1. A person who helps out in his or her community.
3. What VISTA members build.
4. It is important that VISTA members do this with the skills they develop during their term of service.
5. Abbreviation for the national service program where volunteers are 60 or older and work with at-risk children.
8. Ensuring that something will last.
10. Going out and finding VISTA members for your program.
11. The first training event your VISTA member will attend.
13. The stream of national service that recruits older adults as volunteers is _____ Corps.
14. Abbreviation for what you provide to your VISTA member immediately after they return from their pre-service orientation.
16. What all VISTA programs work to move people out of.
17. Something that can be used for support or help.

The National Service Network

Supervisor Roles

Corporation for
NATIONAL &
COMMUNITY
SERVICE 



Social
Innovation
Fund

AmeriCorps
NCCC

AmeriCorps
State/National
Grants

AmeriCorps
VISTA

The Mission of VISTA

To start, strengthen, or expand programs, systems or services that help people move out of poverty.

Definitions

Direct Service:

The act of providing services to the identified recipients or clients of a program.

Capacity Building:

Tasks and activities to create, expand or strengthen an organization's systems or processes.

These tasks and activities include the transfer of knowledge, relationships and products.

Transfer of Knowledge

Information gained by the VISTA member during his/her term of service is passed along to other people in an organization in a deliberately designed way.

Transfer of Products

Deliverables created by the VISTA member during his/her term of service are passed along to other people in an organization in a deliberately designed way.

Transfer of Relationships

Professional contacts developed by the VISTA member during his/her term of service are passed along to other people in an organization in a deliberately designed way.

VISTA Project Plan – Example

Column A	Column B Date(s)	Column C
<p>AmeriCorps VISTA Project Plan</p> <p>Community Need: Describe the community need to be addressed in relation to the problem(s) identified in your project narrative (Need).</p> <p><i>Studies have found that more than 500 children and youth in Waketa County have at least one incarcerated parent.</i></p> <p><i>About two-thirds of these children and youth (61%) live in households with incomes below the Federal poverty line and are more inclined to suffer drug use, diminished high school graduation rates and unemployment.</i></p> <p><i>Waketa Community Services (WCS) currently provides mentoring services to children and youth of incarcerated parents; however, WCS has had difficulty finding enough volunteers to meet the demand for mentors.</i></p>		
<p>Goal Statement: Describe the impact your project will have in addressing the community need identified above. This goal statement should cover the three-year project period.</p> <p><i>To help ensure that children of incarcerated parents receive the educational, social and emotional support they need to help them break the cycle of poverty, the WCS VISTA project will build the capacity of the organization by developing a sustainable Volunteer Recruitment and Management system for the mentoring program.</i></p>		
<p>Performance Milestone</p> <p><i>At least three Volunteer Recruitment and Management system components will be created and/or revised.</i></p> <p>Indicator: System components created and/or revised. These may include but are not limited to: volunteer recruitment database, screening procedures, mentor training curricula, and volunteer support resources.</p> <p>Target: Three system components will be created and/or revised.</p>	April 20XX	

VISTA Project Plan – Example (cont.)

Column A	Column B Date(s)	Column C
<p>AmeriCorps VISTA Project Plan</p> <p>How Measured: Volunteer Recruitment and Management System Checklist.</p> <p>Description of Data Collection: The VISTA supervisor will use the Volunteer Recruitment and Management System Checklist approximately twice per month to track the status of each system component VISTA members are working on.</p>		
<p>Performance Milestone New/revised recruitment systems are operational: 45 Volunteers are recruited.</p> <p>Indicator: Volunteers recruited using new volunteer recruitment systems.</p> <p>Target: 45 volunteers will be recruited.</p> <p>How Measured: Volunteer Recruitment Log</p> <p>Description of Data Collection: Volunteer Recruitment Log, completed after each recruitment event by VISTA member.</p>	Sept 20XX	
<p>Performance Milestone New/revised Volunteer Recruitment and Management systems are effective: 75% (30 of 40) volunteers recruited, trained and managed using the new/revised Volunteer Recruitment and Management system will serve as mentors for at least 9 months.</p> <p>Indicator: Volunteers recruited and managed using the new/revised Volunteer Recruitment and Management system serve as mentors for at least 9 months.</p> <p>Target: 75% of volunteers will serve as mentors for at least 9 months.</p> <p>How Measured: Mentoring Logs.</p> <p>Description of Data Collection: Mentoring Logs, completed weekly by mentors.</p>	Sept 20XX	

Policies on Civil Rights, Equal Opportunity and Harassment

Corporation for National and Community Service Civil Rights Statement Regarding Volunteers, Service Participants and Other Beneficiaries

We continue to maintain the policy stated in our June 6, 1994, Civil Rights Statement:

Recognizing that the fabric of our society is strengthened by the diversity of its citizens, the policy of the Corporation for National and Community Service is to ensure a mutual respect for all differences among us. Participation in the Corporation and its programs and projects will be based on merit and equal opportunity for all, without regard to factors such as race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, political affiliation, marital or parental status, military service, or religious, community, or social affiliations.

By adhering to this policy, the Corporation will be able to foster civic responsibility, strengthen the ties that bind us together as a people, and provide educational opportunity for those who make a substantial commitment to service.

This policy applies to programs and projects we conduct, as well as those receiving federal financial assistance from us. For civil rights purposes, all programs and projects funded or receiving volunteers or service participants under the National and Community Service Act, as amended, or the Domestic Volunteer Service Act, as amended, are programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance. Any grantee found to have unlawfully discriminated against a volunteer, service participant, client, employee or beneficiary of such a program or project will be subject to a finding of noncompliance and administrative procedures which may result in termination of federal financial assistance from the Corporation and all other federal agencies.

Any volunteer, service participant, client, employee or beneficiary of a program or project who believes he or she has been subjected to discrimination in violation of nondiscrimination provisions of applicable laws, regulations or this policy may raise his or her concerns with the Corporation's Office of Civil Rights and Inclusiveness. However, discrimination claims not brought to the attention of our Office of Civil Rights and Inclusiveness within 45 days of their occurrence may not be accepted in a formal complaint of discrimination. Our Office of Civil Rights and Inclusiveness may be reached at (202) 606-7503 (voice), (202) 606-3472 (TDD), eo@cns.gov, or through www.nationalservice.org.

The Corporation's Office of Civil Rights and Inclusiveness attempts to resolve concerns about discrimination promptly and, when possible, uses an informal conciliation process to do so. We encourage, but do not require, volunteers, service participants, and other beneficiaries to first bring concerns about discrimination to the director or appropriate personnel of the program or project. We likewise encourage directors of programs and projects to facilitate prompt resolution of these concerns.

Directors of all programs and projects are requested to provide a copy of this policy to all volunteers or service participants.

Corporation for National and Community Service Equal Opportunity and Workforce Diversity Policy for Employees and Applicants for Employment

It is our policy to provide equal employment opportunity for all applicants for employment and employees of the Corporation. We do not discriminate in any aspect of employment because of race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, mental or physical disability (including AIDS), sexual orientation, or any other improper criterion. We strive to provide a work environment free of sexual, racial, national origin, religious or other unlawful harassment.

Policies on Civil Rights, Equal Opportunity and Harassment (cont.)

Equal opportunity for all employees is an integral part of accomplishing the mission of the Corporation. As chief executive officer of the Corporation, I am strongly committed to fostering a workplace that is free of discrimination in any form. I believe that we should be committed to practicing inclusiveness, fairness, and participation of all employees in every facet of the Corporation.

Beyond the basic policies of equal employment and non-discrimination described above, we aspire to provide an environment that is hospitable for all employees. We value diversity among our employees, and I am committed to promoting a climate of mutual respect and appreciation for the strengths that a diverse workforce brings to bear on our important work.

In addition to making certain that our employees are treated with respect and according to the principles of equal opportunity in the workplace, we must make every effort to ensure that our employees, as they carry out their duties, do not discriminate on unlawful grounds against persons or organizations, volunteers or service participants, including subjecting them to any form of unlawful harassment.

I expect every Corporation manager, supervisor, and employee to actively carry out our equal opportunity policy. Implicit in each employee's "successful" performance level is his or her full and complete implementation of this policy. I call upon all managers and supervisors to ensure that all decisions affecting our workforce, service environments, grantees and programs are consistent with the principles of equal opportunity and this policy. Any person who violates this equal opportunity policy will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Any Corporation employee or applicant for employment who believes he or she has been discriminated against in violation of equal opportunity laws, regulations, or this policy, or in retaliation for having participated in an activity protected under these nondiscrimination provisions may raise his or her concerns with our Office of Civil Rights and Inclusiveness. However, discrimination claims not brought to the attention of our Office of Civil Rights and Inclusiveness within 45 days of their occurrence may not be accepted in a formal complaint of discrimination. Our Office of Civil Rights and Inclusiveness may be reached at (202) 606-7503 (voice), (202) 606-3472 (TDD), or eo@cns.gov, or through our Web site at www.nationalservice.org.

Corporation for National and Community Service Policy Against Sexual, Racial, National Origin, or Religious Harassment

Our policy is to provide work and service environments free from sexual, racial, national origin, or religious harassment. Whether in Corporation or grantee offices, in other work- or service-related settings such as service sites, training sessions, or site visits, or at work- or service-related social events, such harassment is unacceptable.

Sexual harassment involves unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or any verbal, physical or graphic conduct of a sexual nature when:

1. submission is explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment or service;
2. submission or rejection is a basis for work or service decisions; or
3. such conduct has the purpose or the effect of interfering with work or service performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or service environment.

Slurs and other verbal or physical conduct relating to an individual's race, national origin or religion also constitute harassment when that conduct's purpose or effect is to interfere with work or service performance or create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or service environment.

We expect Corporation and grantee supervisory and management personnel to immediately take appropriate action to prevent or stop any harassment of employees, service participants, or clients of which they become aware, whether the harassing conduct is by employees, service participants, or outside individuals such as service site or contractor personnel. Also, we will not retaliate or tolerate any attempt at retaliation against a person

Policies on Civil Rights, Equal Opportunity and Harassment (cont.)

who raises harassment concerns in good faith. Any Corporation employee who violates our policy against harassment, or asserts a false claim of harassment with a malicious intent, will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Any grantee that permits harassment in violation of this policy will be subject to a finding of noncompliance and administrative procedures that may result in termination of federal financial assistance from the Corporation and all other federal agencies.

Persons who believe they have been subjected to harassment in violation of non-harassment provisions of applicable laws, regulations or this policy may raise their concerns with our Office of Civil Rights and Inclusiveness. However, claims of unlawful harassment not brought to the attention of our Office of Civil Rights and Inclusiveness within 45 days of their occurrence may not be accepted in a formal complaint of discrimination. Our Office of Civil Rights and Inclusiveness may be reached at (202) 606-7503 (voice), (202) 606-3472 (TDD), eo@cns.gov, or through our Web site at www.nationalservice.org.

We encourage, but do not require, volunteers, service participants, and other beneficiaries to first bring concerns about harassment to the director or appropriate supervisory personnel of the program or project. We likewise encourage programs and projects to facilitate prompt resolution of these concerns.

Directors of all programs and projects are requested to provide a copy of this policy to all volunteers or service participants.

Civil Rights and Responsibilities PowerPoint Presentation

slide 1



VISTA Members' Civil Rights & Responsibilities (Supervisor version)



slide 2

Session Objectives

By the end of this session, Supervisors will be able to:

- ▶ Discuss core concepts related to equal opportunity, civil rights, discrimination and sexual harassment
- ▶ Identify the possible ways for responding to civil rights violations and sexual harassment
- ▶ Discuss the Corporation's policy on fraternization
- ▶ Locate the contact information for the Corporation's Office of Civil Rights and Inclusiveness (OCRI)



slide 3

AmeriCorps VISTA Member Rights

- ▶ VISTAs have a **right** not to be subjected to discrimination or harassment by:
 - the Corporation; or
 - any Sponsoring Organization.



slide 4

AmeriCorps VISTA Member Obligations

- ▶ VISTAs also have an **obligation** to make sure their actions do not subject anyone else to discrimination or harassment.
- ▶ This obligation extends to:
 - clients they serve;
 - colleagues, whether they are other AmeriCorps members, employees, or volunteers; and
 - other participants and beneficiaries of the program



slide 5

For the Record...

- ▶ VISTAs are not federal employees (except for limited purposes).
- ▶ VISTAs are not employees of your sponsoring organization, project, or site (for any purpose).
- ▶ VISTAs are not federal employees for civil rights purposes. VISTAs are *beneficiaries* of federal financial assistance for civil rights purposes, and this gives them certain nondiscrimination protections and obligations.



slide 6

VISTAs are protected from discrimination or harassment based on:

Age	Race
Color	Religion
Disability	Gender
Reprisal	
Marital/Parental Status	
Sexual Orientation	
National Origin	
Political Affiliation	
Military Service	
Religious, Community or Social Affiliations	



Civil Rights and Responsibilities PowerPoint Presentation (cont.)

slide 7

4 Sources of Help

1. Supervisor
2. Corporation State Office
3. Office of Civil Rights and Inlusiveness in Washington, D.C. (OCRI)
4. VISTA Member Handbook; specifically Chapter 14



slide 8

Contact :

OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS & INCLUSIVENESS

1201 New York Avenue, NW
Suite 10800
Washington, DC 20525

(202) 606-7503 (hotline)

(202) 606-3472 (TDD)

(202) 606-3465 (fax)

eo@cns.gov (email)



Civil Rights and Responsibilities Scenarios

Scenario 1

The VISTA sponsor has decided that a VISTA member, who is deaf, will not be allowed to drive the organization's vehicles. The supervisor states that the decision is based on safety concerns about the driver being able to hear other vehicles, warnings from passengers, and emergency vehicles.

Is this discrimination or harassment? Why? Why not?

How could the VISTA respond?

Civil Rights and Responsibilities Scenarios (cont.)

Scenario 2

A staff member at one of the sponsor's sites constantly makes jokes about sex, makes negative comments about gender, and has cartoons on the office wall that are either sexual in nature or demean individuals based on their gender. Several VISTA members feel uncomfortable around this staff person and avoid being in the office alone with this staff person.

Is this discrimination or harassment? Why? Why not?

How could the VISTAs respond?

Civil Rights and Responsibilities Scenarios (cont.)

Scenario 3

At a statewide service event, a VISTA member from one program meets a supervisor of another VISTA. They spend time socializing during the conference events and feel mutually attracted to each other. The VISTA member asks the supervisor for a date after the conference.

Is this discrimination or harassment? Why? Why not?

Will their dating violate the Corporation for National and Community Service policy?
If so, how?

How could the VISTA supervisor respond?

Civil Rights and Responsibilities Scenarios (cont.)

Scenario 4

A VISTA member who uses a wheelchair requests the sponsoring organization to provide a desk that automatically adjusts to accommodate the wheelchair. The cost of the desk is over a thousand dollars. The sponsoring organization decides to use concrete blocks to raise the desk to the appropriate level.

Is this discrimination or harassment? Why? Why not?

How could the VISTA respond?

Civil Rights and Responsibilities Scenarios (cont.)

Scenario 5

A staff member of one of the sponsors informs VISTA members that some of the community leaders have communicated that they are uncomfortable with the way some of the members dress. The community leaders say that hair and beard length, clothing, and head coverings create fear in the community. The supervisor asks VISTA members to be more conscious of their appearance.

Is this discrimination or harassment? Why? Why not?

How could the VISTA respond?

Civil Rights and Responsibilities Scenarios (cont.)

Scenario 6

The VISTA members on a project notice that only female members are involved with a site that works with teenage parents and only male members are involved with a site that is supporting male mentoring/rites of passage.

Is this discrimination or harassment? Why? Why not?

How could the VISTA respond?

Civil Rights and Responsibilities Scenarios (cont.)

Scenario 7

A VISTA member notices that there seems to be a difference in the way that members are held accountable and disciplined based on race/ethnicity. Some members are threatened, given “punishment” tasks, and refused opportunities for advanced training for the same problems for which other members are given “counseling sessions.”

Is this discrimination or harassment? Why? Why not?

How could the VISTA respond?

Sources of Information

From the VISTA Member Handbook

- Civil Rights Laws, Chapter 14, p. 105-109
- Discrimination Complaint Procedures, Chapter 14, p. 109, and Volunteer Discrimination Complaint Procedure, Appendix C
- Sexual Harassment, Chapter 14, p. 108
- VISTA Fraternization, Chapter 14, p. 114
- Non-Discrimination of the Basis of Handicap..., Appendix C
- If available, these sections may be supplemented by sections of the Equal Opportunity Trainer’s Workbook and Office of Civil Rights and Inclusiveness pamphlets

Civil Rights and Responsibilities Summary

You are protected by VISTA and the Corporation for National and Community Service from being subjected to discrimination or harassment. You also have an obligation as a VISTA to make sure you do not subject anyone else to discrimination or harassment. This extends to everyone you come in contact with, including other VISTAs, clients, and volunteers and employees at your service site.

What Is Discrimination?

Discrimination is treating people differently because of who they are, where they come from, or the groups they belong to. Discrimination in a VISTA service setting is **illegal** when it targets a person or group based on such **non-merit factors** as race, gender, or religion, also known as **protected classes**, which the Corporation for National and Community Service defines as the following:

- Race, color, or national origin
- Sex/gender
- Disability (physical or mental)
- Age
- Religion
- Political affiliation
- Gender identity and expression
- Sexual orientation

Illegal discrimination:

- BOTH targets a person or group because of a difference AND singles them out for different treatment
- May be a one-time occurrence or part of an ongoing pattern
- Can happen to anyone

What Is Harassment?

Illegal harassment in a VISTA service setting is **severe and/or pervasive** verbal or non-verbal communication relating to an individual's gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, or any other **non-merit factor** that interferes with a VISTA's performance and/or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive service environment. Harassment can consist of spoken or written words, images, or actions and can happen to anyone. It includes but is not limited to:

- Explicit or implicit demands for sexual favors
- Pressure for one's company
- Unwelcome persistent letters, phone calls, emails or other media
- Distribution or display of offensive material
- Offensive looks, gestures, physical encroachment, or threatening behavior

Civil Rights and Responsibilities Summary (cont.)

Illegal harassment:

- Includes – but is not limited to – sexual harassment
- Can be spoken words or unspoken actions
- Is more than just annoying or uncomfortable behavior
- Generally happens over a period of time
- Creates a hostile, intimidating, or offensive service environment
- Prevents a VISTA from serving effectively
- Can happen to anyone

What Should I do if I Experience or Witness Discrimination or Harassment?

If you feel safe and comfortable doing so, you can approach and talk to the person you suspect of engaging in harassing or discriminating behavior directly yourself. If that doesn't work, or if you do not feel safe and comfortable doing so, you can also talk to your VISTA supervisor.

If you can not go to your supervisor, or you do and the matter is not resolved to your satisfaction, you can contact your state office (see list of state office contacts below). Finally, you can contact the Corporation's Office of Civil Rights and Inclusiveness or OCRI (see contact information below). If you and/or your VISTA supervisor or state office contact chooses to contact OCRI, note that claims must be made within 45 days of the incident.

Useful Questions/Suggestions if you think you have experienced or witnessed Discrimination or Harassment?

- Have I (Can I) talk to the person involved?
- What assumptions might I be making? How can I check out these assumptions?
- Assume positive intent. Communicate to clarify.
- Use statements such as, "It appears to me that..."
- Speak with a supervisor (if you can).
- Ask yourself: Is there something I can learn from this?

Where Can I go for More Information?

The Corporation for National and Community Service takes discrimination and harassment very seriously and makes the following resources available to you:

- **Corporation State Office Contacts** – A list of state offices can be found online at the VISTA Campus at vistacampus.gov.

Civil Rights and Responsibilities Summary (cont.)

- **Contact Information for OCRI** – Contact OCRI via mail, phone, fax or email at:
 - 1201 New York Avenue, NW**
 - Suite 10800**
 - Washington, DC 20525**
 - (202) 606-7503 (hotline)**
 - (202) 606-3472 (TDD)**
 - (202) 606-3465 (fax)**
 - eo@cns.gov (email)**
- **Complete List of the Corporation’s Official Policies on Discrimination and Harassment** – These can be found in the online VISTA Member Handbook at <http://vistacampus.gov/mod/book/view.php?id=2093>.

Fraternization Policy

Relationships between VISTA members and the staff members (including volunteer and contracted personnel) of the Corporation, sponsoring organization, and project site that are exploitive or that have the appearance of partiality, preferential treatment, or the improper use of position for personal gain, are prejudicial to the morale of VISTA members and will not be tolerated.

Relationships between members and the aforementioned staff members are forbidden if the relationship compromises or appears to compromise supervisory authority or could result in preferential treatment. Relationships are prohibited if they appear to involve the improper use of rank or position for personal gain.

All VISTA members must avoid nonprofessional relationships with other members or staff members that create real or perceived conflicts of interest, discord, or distractions that interfere with other members' productivity, or potentially could result in charges of sexual harassment. These problems are serious in situations in which one person has authority over another.

Inappropriate relations include, but are not limited to,

- a Corporation state office staff member and a VISTA supervisor within that state;
- a Corporation state office staff member and a VISTA member or leader;
- a VISTA supervisor and a VISTA member at the same project; and
- a VISTA leader and a VISTA member under his/her coordination.

Such relationships are strictly forbidden and will not be tolerated. Violators may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including removal.

Nonprofessional relationships between members and the aforementioned staff includes, but is not limited to,

- intimate/sexual relationships
- borrowing or lending money, automobiles, or other personal property
- engaging in financial or business dealings, or acting as an agent or sponsor with any commercial services
- allowing services to be performed (compensated or uncompensated) that have no reasonable connection with VISTA activities
- gambling for goods, services, or money
- any activity and/or relationship that, in the judgment of the Corporation state program director, may reasonably be perceived to undermine discipline, good order, and/or morale
- socializing that might lead to the perception of a relationship or overtures to activities listed above

**Corporation for National and
Community Service
Office of Civil Rights and Inclusiveness
1201 New York Avenue
Washington, DC 20525
Voice: 202-606-7503
TDD: 202-606-3472
FAX: 202-606-3465
E-Mail: eo@cns.gov**

*EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IS EVERYONE'S
RESPONSIBILITY*

VISTA Assignment Description (VAD) – Sample

Title: Mentor Recruitment and Management Systems Designer
Sponsoring Organization: Waketa Community Services (WCS)
Project Name: MentorCorps
Project Number: 12ABCD345
Project Period: 08/20/20XX - 08/19/20YY
Site Name (if applicable):
Focus Area(s) Primary: Education Secondary:
Note: <i>If your VAD is not accepted, the State Office will note the reason(s) why here.</i>

VISTA Assignment Objectives and Member Activities

Goal of the Project: To help ensure that children of incarcerated parents receive the educational, social, and emotional support they need to help them break the cycle of poverty, the MentorCorps VISTA project will build the capacity of WCS by developing a sustainable volunteer recruitment and management system for its mentoring program.

Objective of the Assignment (8/20/20XX – 2/01/20YY)

Assess the current state of WCS' efforts in reaching, selecting, and supporting volunteer mentors, and create or revise policies, procedures, and documents to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of the mentor-recruitment and matching system.

Member Activities:

1. Research the history of volunteer programs at WCS.
 - a. Identify strengths and challenges of the current program. Based on this report, make a plan for improvement.
2. Develop systems for screening and matching mentors.

Objective of the Assignment (1/01/20YY – 8/19/20YY)

Set up outreach systems and build partnerships with community organizations in order to spread the word out about the mentor program. Develop targeted marketing materials.

Member Activities:

1. Plan for outreach and recruitment.
 - a. Identify skills, abilities, and experiences sought in volunteer mentors.
 - b. Write volunteer task descriptions that include: qualifications, activities, benefits, time commitment, and other expectations.
 - c. Develop partnerships with community organizations whose members are possible mentors or who can support the organization in other ways.
 - d. Develop partnerships with people or organizations that understand the needs of children of prisoners and can assist with the training and support of mentors.
2. Market the program to targeted audiences.

VISTA Assignment Description (VAD) – Template

VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)

Title:
Sponsoring Organization:
Project Name:
Project Number:
Project Period:
Site Name (if applicable):
Focus Area(s) Primary:
Secondary:
Note: <i>[Filled in by State Office staff, if applicable.]</i>

VISTA Assignment Objectives and Member Activities

Goal of the Project:

Objective of the Assignment (–)

Member Activities:

Objective of the Assignment (–)

Member Activities:

A version of this template can be downloaded from the VISTA Campus at
http://vistacampus.org/file.php/50/VAD/AdaptingVADs/VAD_Template_Rev_Oct_2012.doc.

VAD Follow-up Plan

1. Identify steps that would help the VISTA in accomplishing the Member Activities (if the steps are not already listed on the VAD).

Member Activity		Timeline	
Steps			

Member Activity		Timeline	
Steps			

Member Activity		Timeline	
Steps			

Member Activity		Timeline	
Steps			

VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)

VAD Follow-up Plan (cont.)

2. What type of support and resources will your VISTA need in order to carry out the activities listed in the VAD?

VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)

3. What are your expectations of your VISTA in implementing the VAD and how do you plan to communicate those expectations to your VISTA?

4. What are your plans for providing initial and ongoing coaching and support to your VISTA in relation to implementing the VAD?

Note: A copy of this template can be downloaded from the VISTA Campus at http://vistacampus.org/file.php/50/VAD/VADsatTraining/VAD_Follow-up_Plan.doc.

Sample VISTA Leader Assignment Description (VLAD)

VISTA Project:
Project CONNECT

VISTA Member Name:
Asif Khouri

Site Name:
Project CONNECT

Assignment Area:
Volunteer Management

Date:
May 15, 2012

VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)

VISTA Leader Activities and Steps Checklist	Planned Period of Work
<p>Goal: Enhance VISTA project success and sustainability by facilitating the VISTA team, supporting team members in their work, and working in partnership with the VISTA project supervisor on project management tasks.</p>	
<p>Activity 1: Support recruitment of high quality VISTAs</p> <p>Step 1: Review VADs for clarity, accuracy and consistency and suggest improvements</p> <p>Step 2: Research recruitment opportunities and promote position announcement through local venues</p> <p>Step 3: Suggest process for candidate assessment and evaluation that incorporates the VAD in the process</p> <p>Step 4: Assist in screening applicants</p> <p>Step 5: Assist in setting up interviews and participate in interviews</p>	May – Aug 2012
<p>Activity 1 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:</p>	<p>Activity 1 Completed (date):</p>
<p>Activity 2: Conduct VISTA member training and coordinate ongoing professional development</p> <p>Step 1: Form a plan with supervisor for the on-site orientation and training (OSOT); gather orientation materials, draft agenda, secure presenters/facilitators, etc.</p> <p>Step 2: Participate in the implementation of OSOT, utilizing facilitator/educator skills, to ensure that VISTAs understand all policies/procedures and project schedule</p> <p>Step 3: Evaluate and report on the OSOT to the supervisor, defining changes to be made for the next OSOT</p> <p>Step 4: Identify learning needs of VISTAs and develop calendar of trainings on topics such as cultural diversity, conflict resolution, poverty, and volunteer management</p> <p>Step 5: Secure local instructors to present trainings or prepare to deliver training</p>	<p>May – Aug 2012</p> <p>Aug 2012 – Feb 2013</p>

Sample VISTA Leader Assignment Description (VLAD) (cont.)

VISTA Leader Activities and Steps Checklist	Planned Period of Work
<p>Step 6: Facilitate and encourage peer learning among VISTAs</p> <p>Step 7: Maintain professional development log for all VISTA members, distribute completion certificates</p>	
<p>Activity 2 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:</p>	<p>Activity 2 Completed (date):</p>
<p>Activity 3: Facilitate a successful year of service for VISTAs</p> <p>Step 1: Conduct one-on-one monthly meetings with each VISTA member to review VAD goals, assess progress, address member needs, etc., to ensure a successful year for VISTAs</p> <p>Step 2: Assist VISTAs in clarifying problems and creating their own solutions, involving the supervisor if the VISTA cannot resolve the issue otherwise</p> <p>Step 3: Coordinate four projects for National Days of Service (September 11th National Day of Remembrance, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. National Day of Service, Cesar E. Chavez Day and AmeriCorps Week)</p> <p>Step 4: Guide VISTA members in creating their own sustainability manuals to assist subsequent VISTAs with continuing project implementation</p>	<p>Aug 2012 – Apr 2013</p>
<p>Activity 3 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:</p>	<p>Activity 3 Completed (date):</p>
<p>Activity 4: Increase project and member effectiveness by monitoring member monthly reports</p> <p>Step 1: Train VISTA members on the organization's reporting requirements</p> <p>Step 2: Assist VISTA members with reporting needs, escalating issues to appropriate supervisor</p> <p>Step 3: Collect monthly reports from each VISTA member, review data and summarize for project coordinator</p>	<p>Aug 2012 – Apr 2013</p>
<p>Activity 4 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:</p>	<p>Activity 4 Completed (date):</p>

Sample VISTA Leader Assignment Description (VLAD) (cont.)

VISTA Leader Activities and Steps Checklist	Planned Period of Work
<p>Activity 5: Work with supervisor to ensure overall project stability and sustainability</p> <p>Step 1: Archive all significant materials created and document all procedures for implementing the project, for convenient future retrieval by organization staff, future VISTAs and VISTA leaders</p> <p>Step 2: Suggest changes to the program based on challenges and successes VISTAs have experienced</p> <p>Step 3: In collaboration with staff members, create and implement a written plan for project sustainability</p>	Jan – Apr 2013
<p>Activity 5 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:</p>	<p>Activity 5 Completed (date):</p>

Multi-Level Benefits of an Effective Member-Supervisor Relationship

For the Year of Service:

- More efficient use of the service year – more direction, more on target
- More effective year of service – ongoing feedback and clarification that helps meet the goals of the service plan
- More productive year of service – because of the coaching, many members not only fulfill their assignment but also go beyond their original scopes
- Greater member retention – ongoing support yields members more likely to complete a full year of service successfully
- Increased opportunities for issues of poverty to be addressed

For the Member:

- Greater assignment satisfaction
- Greater opportunities to grow in their advocacy of the issues
- Greater mobilization of community assets and resources
- More personal needs and goals met
- More effective problem solving and conflict resolution
- Increased chances for stronger connection and commitment to the host, sponsor, community
- Increased chances for early grounding in the cultures of the sponsor organization and the community
- Increased opportunities for personal and professional growth
- Increased opportunities for corrective action should something go off course
- More accurate pulse of how the service year is proceeding
- Better orientation and preparation to carry out the service
- Increased opportunities to be coached in an ethic and life of service
- Increased opportunities to be more productive as a result of the partnership with the supervisor

For the Supervisor:

- Greater job satisfaction
- Greater opportunities to seed deep commitment and advocacy of the issues
- Greater mobilization of community assets and resources
- More effective problem solving and conflict resolution
- Increased chances for stronger connection to the host, sponsor, community

Multi-Level Benefits of an Effective Member-Supervisor Relationship (cont.)

- Increased chances of getting rejuvenated and renewed to carry on the work
- Increased chances for greater cultural competency on the part of the member
- Increased opportunities for corrective action should something go off course
- More accurate pulse of how the service year is proceeding
- More awareness of national service as a resource, opportunity, community
- Increased opportunities to coach and mentor an ethic and life of service
- Increased opportunities for greater productivity as a result of the partnership with the member

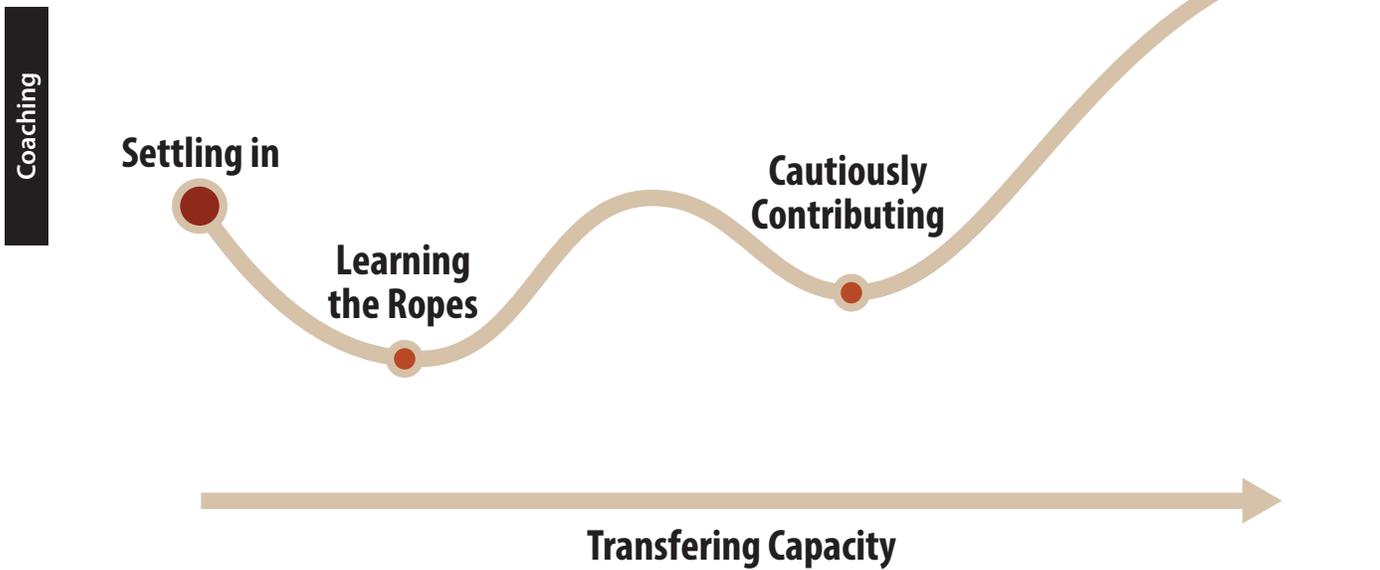
For the Community:

- Greater engagement with strategies that affect their lives
- Greater advocacy for issues that affect their lives
- Increased opportunities to have a member in service who is respectful, culturally aware and appropriate
- Increased opportunities to have a member in service who functions as a consistent ally
- Increased opportunities to have capacity building needs of the community met
- Increased opportunities for issues of poverty to be addressed

For VISTA and CNCS:

- More efficient, effective, and productive year of service
- Greater member retention
- Greater promotion of national service
- Increased chances that the partnership between member, sponsor, and VISTA program will be a win-win-win
- Greater use of national service resources at the community level
- Greater awareness of all national service programs and opportunities for civic engagement
- Greater recognition of the power of national civic engagement
- Increased opportunities for issues of poverty to be addressed and the legacy of the VISTA program to be furthered

A Common VISTA Cycle of Service



VISTA Cycle of Service Guidance

Identify approaches and resources you can use to support, guide and coach VISTAs during each phase of their service. Lengths of time in each phase are approximate. Each VISTA will move through the cycle at his/her own pace.

Phase	Approaches	Resources
1. Settling in (1-2 months)		
2. Learning the Ropes (3-4 months)		
3. Cautiously Contributing (5-6 months)		
4. Performing Your Best (7-12 months)		

About Coaching ...

- When you coach members, you increase interaction with them. You listen, inquire, communicate and search for solutions.
- Coaching allows people to share their perceptions of what happened in an event or situation, and discuss the perceptions.
- A coach asks open-ended questions and guides someone to think something through, instead of giving answers.
- Coaching is performance focused and provides feedback on both strengths and weaknesses.
- Coaching requires people to slow down, listen more deeply and become less reactive. A coach could be wrong. A coach does not have all the answers.

Adapted from: *The Heart of Coaching: Using Transformational Coaching to Create a High-Performance Culture*, 2nd Edition, 2002. Thomas Crane, Lerissa Nancy Patrick and Troy Parker.

Open-Ended Questions ...

- Help a member explore an issue in greater depth

- Elicit a wide range of answers

- Allow a member to show how she perceives a situation

- Help explore values, assumptions, intentions and interpretations

- Begin with who, what, when, where, why and how
 - How does that impact the project?
 - What did you observe?
 - What happened when you...?

Criteria for Helpful VISTA-Supervisor Conferences

- Regular, ongoing and frequent enough
- Reliable
- Dedicated
- Negotiated and predictable
- Multi-purpose
- Affirming and provides good feedback
- Promotes growth and discovery
- Helps build capacity
- Practical

Member-Supervisor Scenarios

Scenario One: Renny and David

Renny is David's VISTA supervisor at the Community Impact Coalition (CIC). David is passionate and highly motivated to succeed and make a difference. He and Renny get along well, respect each other, and communicate frequently and easily. Renny has written into David's VAD, "Create a grants tracking database, including potential and existing funders related to the mission of CIC, deadlines and areas of focus. Also include grants that were previously applied for and denied (include reason for denial when possible.)"

A month into the service year, Renny is frustrated with David. He feels David requires too much "hand-holding." He is coming to Renny 2-3 times a day with question after question about the activity. With David's constant need for support and reinforcement, Renny is beginning to feel he could create the database himself in less time than it's taking him to guide David.

David has a different perspective. The organization does not have a development office so volunteers, various staff and some board members have written grants. David has developed many databases; he knows he has the skill set to create the system, but he feels that Renny has thrown him the project with almost no guidance. David appreciates that Renny isn't hierarchical, like his last boss. But creating a comprehensive grants database as described in the VAD requires some background knowledge, much of which has never been defined or documented at CIC.

Scenario Two: Grace and Felecia

Felecia is Grace's supervisor at Employment NOW!. Felecia is a former VISTA and quite proud that at 27, she's already a supervisor. She's also really grateful for her VISTA, Grace.

Grace is from the community Employment NOW! serves and raised five children on her own. She has been a tireless volunteer at her church and at ABC for many years, before joining VISTA. She has great people skills, and seems to know everybody. In Grace's VAD, Felecia wrote, "Convene community meetings to assess local employment needs and trends." This task should be right up Grace's alley. But Grace has a mind of her own. She says it's a waste of time to convene too many people and schedule a bunch of meetings. Felecia needs to discuss this with Grace.

Member-Supervisor Scenarios (cont.)

Grace has a different perspective. She already knows the right people to get input from—her pastor and a couple of other “movers and shakers,”—and she’s called them already to hear what they think. She’s ready to roll up her sleeves and get busy on the real work. Grace likes her supervisor, but thinks Felecia’s a little “wet behind the ears.” If she listens to her too much, the project will barely be started by the end of her year as a VISTA!

Scenario Three: Tammy and Nathan

Tammy is Nathan’s VISTA supervisor. Nathan is highly educated and totally passionate about issues of hunger. Tammy sees Nathan as a great asset to the Food Bank. But two months into his service, she can tell Nathan’s frustrated. He complains constantly about the organization’s bureaucracy and how long it takes to get approval for anything. Tammy was worried Nathan was going to quit VISTA when the Executive Director nixed his idea to stage a “hunger strike” to raise awareness in the community. Tammy wants to conference with Nathan about how to balance his idealism with the realities of working within an organization.

Nathan has a different perspective. He thought VISTA was about being a “change agent.” At first, Tammy seemed excited about his ideas, and said they could modify his VAD to incorporate them. But after the “hunger strike” got squelched, he feels Tammy’s running scared. He thinks a supervisor should be all about removing barriers, not apologizing for them!

Potential Member-Supervisor Sticking Points

- A.** Work ethic clash
- B.** Personality, work, communication style-clashes
- C.** Mobilizing resources in a manner that hurts standing partnerships and relationships
- D.** Not keeping the other informed or in-the-loop re: an emerging issue
- E.** Only the member and supervisor understand the VISTA service and project staff and community members have treated the member as “support-clerical staff”
- F.** Failure to respect the existing chain-of-command, chain of communication
- G.** Power struggle over the credit for something
- H.** Taking a stand on a position or doing something that puts the other’s standing in the community in jeopardy
- I.** Not following through on commitments to meet and monitor progress
- J.** Disclosing or releasing controversial information out into the community prior to checking with the other
- K.** Failing to follow through on a promise, commitment
- L.** Misunderstanding about how capacity gets built to support sustainability
- M.** Not recognizing or being aware of the supervisor’s schedule (which only allocates a limited amount of time to the VISTA position).

Ideas for Addressing Supervisory Sticking Points

- Negotiate a solid set of working agreements
- Clarify expectations from the beginning
- Address the behavior, not the person
- Give specific, timely feedback and use the 4-step DESC Feedback Process:
 - Step 1: Describe what the volunteer is doing that creates problems
 - Step 2: Express why that behavior is a problem
 - Step 3: Specify what the supervisor wants the member to do instead (with input from the member)
 - Step 4: Clarify the consequences for changing or failing to change the problem behavior
- Seek to understand the situation from multiple perspectives
- Commit to working together for a Win-Win
- If an agreement is reached, re-state and clarify the next steps, possibly with a written agreement
- Sometimes a neutral 3rd party can be helpful, possibly contact the CNCS state office for help
- Keep good documentation

Common Retention Challenges for VISTAs

Areas	For Individual	For Organization and Community
Vision/Mission, Role Clarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little or no understanding and commitment to vision/mission • Service and role description unclear • Unclear how activities link to mission and vision • Little satisfaction with direction of service project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little effort to clarify and sustain commitment to mission and vision • Lack of broad base of support for mission and vision • Misrepresents vision and mission • Little effort to communicate progress towards vision
People/ Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homesickness and trouble finding new support system • Fall in love and must follow partner • Crisis time for loved one • Involvement in a major conflict • Little accountability and respect for sponsor or community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mismatch in supervisory relationship • Incompatibility with team or supervisor • Organization and community struggle to accept and/or embrace VISTA • Lack of effort to welcome, respect, and include VISTA in local networks
Materials, Resources, and Machines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stipend subsistence too challenging, overwhelming financial hardship • Inadequate housing, no affordable housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to deliver on resources to get job done (work space, computers, vehicles, advisory committee, etc.) • Major budget changes affect whole effort
Health and Well Being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accident • Serious illness, poor health • Pregnancy • Burn-out, work or weather too challenging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bankruptcy, corruption • Gross disorganization • Power struggles and chaos
Policies, Procedures, and Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clash with policies • Trouble with law • Harassment, discrimination • Inability to align personal priorities with that of service project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of clear communication or fair enforcement of policies • Out-dated, impractical, or discriminatory policies and practices
Program, Activities, Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not about capacity building • Lacks interest, skills and experience to carry out assignment successfully • Unrealistic goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service assignment is different than what was described • Major amounts of time are on direct services and not capacity building • Poorly planned and conceived activities
Work and Community Ethic and Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unclear about organization's community ethic/culture • Prejudice and culturally insensitive • Incompatibility with work ethic of sponsor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prejudice and lack of cultural sensitivity to VISTA • Bad fit with organizational culture and local work ethic

Supervisor Questions for VISTA Members

To help inform your recruitment and Onsite Orientation and Training plan, use this tool to gather perspectives on these topics from VISTA candidates.

Recruitment	<p>How did you first hear about VISTA? How did you hear about the program you will serve with?</p> <hr/> <hr/>
	<p>What convinced you to apply to be a VISTA? What recruitment strategies worked with you? If you were going to recruit new VISTAs, how would you do it?</p> <hr/> <hr/>
	<p>How do you think we could recruit a more diverse pool of VISTAs?</p> <hr/> <hr/>
OSOT	<p>What would you like to see included in your VISTA OSOT?</p> <hr/> <hr/>
	<p>What are you most concerned about in terms of starting at your site?</p> <hr/> <hr/>
	<p>What sorts of things would help you feel welcome at your site and in your community?</p> <hr/> <hr/>

Sample: Two-line Teasers

1. Join the premier voluntary organization devoted to helping people prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies in the beautiful Columbia River Basin as its Community Preparedness Specialist.
2. Help prepare our state for disasters!
3. Design programs and systems to help struggling elementary students cultivate a love of reading & learning. Join others from across the US and serve in the Cascade Mountains in rural Washington State.
4. Domestic violence shelter and program that serves a ten-county rural area. Emergency shelter and nonresidential program that includes financial literacy, housing and home-ownership projects.
5. Volunteer will market credit union.
6. If you can read this, you already have half of what it takes to be a VISTA.
7. Build capacity of watershed groups in eastern coal country. Engage community members in abandoned mine reclamation, acid mine drainage remediation, solid waste clean-up, and water quality monitoring.
8. Develop, implement, and evaluate a plan for recruiting prospective volunteers, screen prospective volunteers, organize and provide volunteer training.

Complete Word Bank

- | | | | |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1. Window | 17. Maze | 33. Purse | 49. Woman |
| 2. Typewriter | 18. Spice | 34. Shoe | 50. Molecule |
| 3. Treasure | 19. Opium | 35. Ship | 51. Puzzle |
| 4. Microscope | 20. Landslide | 36. Umbrella | 52. Radio |
| 5. Album | 21. Saloon | 37. Drum | 53. Saddle |
| 6. Altar | 22. Knife | 38. Shell | 54. Bell |
| 7. Lamp | 23. Quilt | 39. Leaf | 55. Weapon |
| 8. Lock | 24. Lake | 40. Monster | 56. Horse |
| 9. Needle | 25. Mattress | 41. Perfume | 57. Muscle |
| 10. Robot | 26. Pendulum | 42. Root | 58. Organ |
| 11. Diamond | 27. Ocean | 43. Valley | 59. Knot |
| 12. Shovel | 28. Rudder | 44. Fruit | 60. Tree |
| 13. Raft | 29. Nail | 45. Shadow | 61. Cloud |
| 14. Pebble | 30. Junk | 46. Pool | 62. Pore |
| 15. Star | 31. Tunnel | 47. Signature | 63. Cup |
| 16. Anvil | 32. Amoeba | 48. Sauce | 64. Sphere |

Sample VISTA Postings

From Craigslist.com:

HEROES seeks two AmeriCorps VISTA members to serve as Volunteer Coordinators for a year-long program starting August 13, 2013. All applicants should possess a genuine interest in National Service, a passion for education, strong verbal and writing skills, computer skills, and be comfortable with public speaking. Applicants must have access to a car. Bilingual a plus.

Habitat for Humanity of Sonoma County (www.sonomacountyhabitat.org) has an opening for a Full Time VISTA Volunteer Faith Relations Coordinator. This position supports the Faith Outreach and Faith Links Committees, is responsible for recruitment of new members and meets regularly with faith leaders to build strategies for volunteer participation. Research and write grants within the faith-based community, recruit youth in fundraising and other Habitat activities; institute an 'Abraham Build' week, bringing together Christians, Muslims and Jews to build on a home with a partner family. Familiarity with faith communities, demonstrated experience working with volunteers, computer literate, ability to work within diverse communities, Bilingual Spanish a plus.

Ever wish you could do something meaningful to help those who are homeless? And to do it as part of a diverse, dynamic and creative team? The Council for the Homeless in Vancouver, WA is seeking a motivated, energetic person to serve as an AmeriCorps VISTA member in a Coordinator role for the collaborative Winter Hospitality Overflow (WHO) program, which provides nightly winter shelter to those in need of emergency shelter in Clark County.

From VISTAnet:

(The VISTAnet list is an ongoing discussion group for VISTAs, former VISTAs, AmeriCorps members, and anyone interested in national service and social issues.)

Florida Alliance for Student Service AmeriCorps VISTA Initiative, Empowering Students Through Volunteerism and Service-Learning to Create Positive Change in Our Communities

GAIN REAL WORLD EXPERIENCE & BUILD YOUR RÉSUMÉ WHILE SERVING AS AN AMERICORPS VISTA

Right now college grads, engineers, teachers, librarians, and others are promoting positive sustainable development as AmeriCorps VISTA members in communities across Florida.

YOU COULD BE NEXT!

Commit one year of your life to working as VISTA member in a Florida community while taking a break from school and work. Learn to write grants, help start youth clubs, facilitate community organization, advocate for service-learning and so much more!

DO YOUR PART TO MAKE A FLORIDA COMMUNITY AND THIS WORLD A BETTER PLACE!!

Marketing Language Worksheet

	Key words	Brief Description
Who are you? (What is your organization, mission, history, and role in the community?)		
Where are you located? (What are the benefits/unique features of your location?)		
What will members do? (Use VAD to develop brief list of tasks. Use active words that convey challenge and excitement, and that describe the capacity-building activities your members will do.)		
Why should people join your project? (What will they learn? What will they accomplish? What do you offer that's unique?)		
When are the start and end dates of your project?		
How does someone get more information? (mail, phone, e-mail)		

Recruitment – To Do List

Program Name _____

Date: _____

Task To Do	Date Needed	Who Will Do It	Completed	Comments (Help Needed, Resources, etc.)

Best Practices: Recruiting and Interviewing

Whether your recruitment potential is to attract many VISTA candidates or just one or two, there are some important ideas to keep in mind to find your 'best' candidate for the position. Let's review:

- Does your website page or recruitment ad tell and even 'sell' potential VISTAs about the vision, mission, values and culture of your organization?
- Do you present a message about how people are valued?
- Do you express your commitment to your employees, to quality, and to those you serve?
- Does your listing provide information that sets your organization apart from other non-profits?
- Does your application process allow for easy application and submission of resumes for the VISTA position?
- Do you post a position description on your website; or do you have the ability to email on out immediately when a potential candidate expresses interest?
- Do you have a mini-newsletter that provides information about your organization; includes, a greeting of thanks for their interest; and provides a short description of the project they would be working on, the desired goals and outcomes, and how this position would contribute to the successful achievement of them.
- Will VISTA candidates feel part of something bigger than themselves if they join you?
- Will your organization nurture their talent and provide opportunities for challenge and professional growth?
- If you want to be the organization of choice your recruiting methods must reflect this message consistently in your communication and follow up actions. This is how your organization's reputation is built....make sure it is the reputation you desire!

How to Prepare for a VISTA Interview: Supervisor Worksheet

I. Identify the top 5 responsibilities the successful VISTA candidate will have to perform in the vacant project position.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

II. Identify the Project Goals and Outcomes. Specify the 3-year goals and objectives; and the goals and outcomes relevant to the current year the candidate is being recruited for.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

III. Identify the special behaviors, attitudes, skills and knowledge the candidate must possess and/or be willing to acquire to meet the responsibilities, goals/outcomes of this position.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

How to Prepare for a VISTA Interview: Supervisor Worksheet (cont.)

IV. Have you shared the project plan/VISTA Assignment Description/position overview with the interviewee prior to the interview?

_____ yes _____ no

If no, set a time and date to convey the information. Who will be assigned to carrying this task out?

V. Have you informed the potential candidate of the following prior to the interview?

1. Provided the candidate with a position description / project plan overview.
2. Discussed the subsistence allowance. This will allow you to discuss the subject during the interview when the candidate has had time to think about his ability to manage on such a small allowance.
3. Shared that the position is full time...and that the expectation may be more than the typical 40 hours per week.
4. Provided a definition of the capacity-building role she is applying for and what that means. Also, how that coordinates with the sponsoring organization's responsibility for project sustainability.
5. Shared your expectations of the time and length of the interview. If the interview is in person, where, when and with whom the interview will be held; if by phone, when and with whom the interview will be held and how much time needs to be reserved by the candidate. Also, indicate if anyone else will be on the interview.
6. Shared your expectations for the candidate to ask questions during the interview based on his review of the VAD and the project plan, which should be read by the time of the interview. Also, having read it already, he should be prepared to talk about the education, experiences, and strengths he has that will support his success should he be offered the position.

Attributes of Successful VISTAs, According to Supervisors

- Flexible
- Take initiative – “self starters”
- Match the project plan to their long-term personal goals – want something out of the experience for themselves
- Enthusiastic
- Motivated
- Strong networkers within the organization and the community
- Self-confident
- Good communicators
- Work well with people from a variety of backgrounds
- Understand the importance of the incremental steps on the project plan while being aware of the vision of the elimination of poverty
- Effectively advocate for themselves and the community

How to Conduct a Successful Behavioral Interview

- Start by identifying what you want the candidate to do in the position. (*VAD*)
- Determine the required outputs and performance success factors for the position.
- Determine the characteristics and traits of the individual you believe will succeed in the position.
- Narrow your list to the top 3–5 traits for the position, including attitudinal traits.
- Make a list of questions to ask each candidate during the behavioral interview. Be sure to ask candidates for a given position the same questions so you can make the best decision based on consistent information.
- Choose the candidates with the characteristics and traits that best match the needs of the position.
- Narrow your final candidates to those who most appear to have the behavioral characteristics, along with the attitude, skills, knowledge, experiences and education you desire.

Sample Questions: Behavioral Interview

- Give an example when you had to manage multiple tasks and how you handled the pressure of the timelines.
- Give an example of a very difficult goal you successfully achieved. What problems did you have to overcome and what strengths did you utilize to achieve your goal?
- Have you handled a difficult situation with a co-worker? How?
- Tell me how you work under pressure and give me an example from your most recent employment.
- Have you gone above and beyond the call of duty? If so, how?
- Have you ever had to convince a team to work on a project they weren't thrilled about? How did you do it?
- Describe a decision you made that was unpopular and how you handled implementing it.
- What do you do when your schedule is interrupted? Give an example of how you handle it.
- Give me a couple of examples from your work history that demonstrate you are a self-starter and possess initiative.
- Give me an example of how you used your problem-solving skills at your last employment.
- Tell me a time you failed or made mistakes at work. How did you deal with the situation and what kind of feedback did you receive from your supervisor?
- Tell me what expectations you have for this VISTA position. How do they relate to your personal and professional goals?
- What unique contribution do you believe you can make to this position and project that no one else can make quite like you can? Why?
- What in your background will help you to live on a limited budget?
- How would you characterize your past two relationships with your supervisors?
- What do you expect from the person you report to? What can they expect from you?
- What situation(s) cause you to feel anxious or nervous at work? How do you manage these situations; and what helps you to become more comfortable and relaxed with them?
- Are you a better decision-maker or problem-solver? Thinking of your recent employment, give me one example that illustrates your strengths; and one example that illustrates your limitations.
- Pretend I don't know anything about VISTA. Describe and explain it to me and what it would mean to your career and your future if you became a VISTA member.

Illegal Interview Questions

Various federal, state, and local laws regulate the questions a prospective employer can ask a job applicant. The sponsoring agency's questions—on the job application, in the interview (whether that be in-person, by phone or internet) or during any testing process—must be related to the position for which the applicant is applying. The focus must be on:

What do I need to know to decide whether or not this person can perform the functions of this position?

Questions should be position-related and not used to find out personal information.

The sponsoring agency should not be asking questions about a person's

- **race**
- **gender**
- **religion**
- **marital status**
- **age**
- **disabilities**
- **ethnic background**
- **nationality**
- **sexual orientation**
- **arrest record**

Examples

Topic: Age

Illegal Question: How old are you? When did you graduate from college? What is your birthday?

Legal Question: Are you over the age of 18?

Topic: Nationality

Illegal Question: Are you a U.S. citizen? Where were you/your parents born? What is your 'native tongue'?

Legal Question: Are you authorized to work in the United States? What languages do you read, speak, or write fluently? (This question is okay as long as it is relevant to the performance of the position)

Topic: Marital/family status

Illegal Interview Questions (cont.)

Illegal Question: What is your marital status? Who do you live with? Do you plan to have a family? When? How many children do you have? What are your child care arrangements?

Legal Question: Would you be willing to relocate if necessary? Travel is an important part of the position. Would you be willing to travel as needed to carry out the job's responsibilities? (This question is okay as long as all applicants for the position are asked it.) The VISTA position is full time. Would you be willing and able to work longer than 8 hours a day, or weekends, if necessary? (Again, this question is okay if all applicants are asked it.)

Topic: Arrest record

Illegal Question: Have you ever been arrested?

Legal Question: Have you ever been convicted of _____? (The crime should be reasonably related to the performance of the job in question.)

Topic: Disabilities

Illegal Question: Do you have any disabilities? Please complete the following medical history? Have you had any recent or past illnesses or surgeries? If yes, list and give dates. What was the date of your last physical exam? How is your family's health? When did you lose your eyesight?

Legal Question: Are you able to perform the essential functions of this position with or without reasonable accommodations? (To ask this question the interviewer must have provided a job description and/or thoroughly described the job position.)

In general, the interviewee is under no obligation to answer any question that is not assignment-related. If s/he chooses not to answer an unrelated assignment question, this cannot be held against them; nor can the sponsoring agency choose not to select an applicant because they have answered the question in an undesirable way. In either case, not selecting the applicant for not answering the question or because you were not satisfied with the answer is considered discriminatory.

Potential Sticking Points: Community Cultural Awareness and Effectiveness

- Violating important community norms
- Demonstrating cultural disrespect
- Being arrogant and vocally judgmental about what has gone on before
- Failure to earn community trust and respect
- Demonstrating extreme disinterest in cultural events, practices, rituals, and ceremonies
- Failure to connect and relate to cultural groups different than their own
- Inappropriately “speaking for the community” and taking on the role of “insider” when that isn’t the case

Important Cultural Aspects and Community Resources

List the important cultural aspects that VISTAs need to know and the community resources that can help teach them:

Cultural Information:	Who? What? How?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What values, practices, relationships, and rituals are important? What people, places, resources, attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors are deemed important? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the community describe, name, and define itself? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How respect is defined and practiced? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the “non-negotiables” of the community? (For every community, there are usually rules that govern one’s conduct regarding relationships and different kinds of resources that are very important to respect and not violate.) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the history of the community—social, spiritual, political, economic, diversity, major successes, major conflicts and struggles, cross-cultural experiences? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the major groups, sectors, and relationships groups have with one another? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the structure of the community? How does the community organize itself? 	

Important Cultural Aspects and Community Resources (cont.)

Cultural Information:	Who? What? How?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who are the formal and informal leaders - who are viewed as spokespeople and the "elder voices" or keepers of wisdom and knowledge? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the traditions of service (how helping others and "volunteering" is understood and lived out within and across this new community)? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the rhythm of a day, week, season, year, and important cycles? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who has the credibility within the community and why. How does one achieve credibility with this group? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What does the community consider its strengths, assets and legacies? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What have been the significant cross-cultural, cross-group experiences for the group or community? What impact might they have on future relationships? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What has the community identified as its priority needs and challenges? 	

Entering Diverse Communities with Cultural Effectiveness

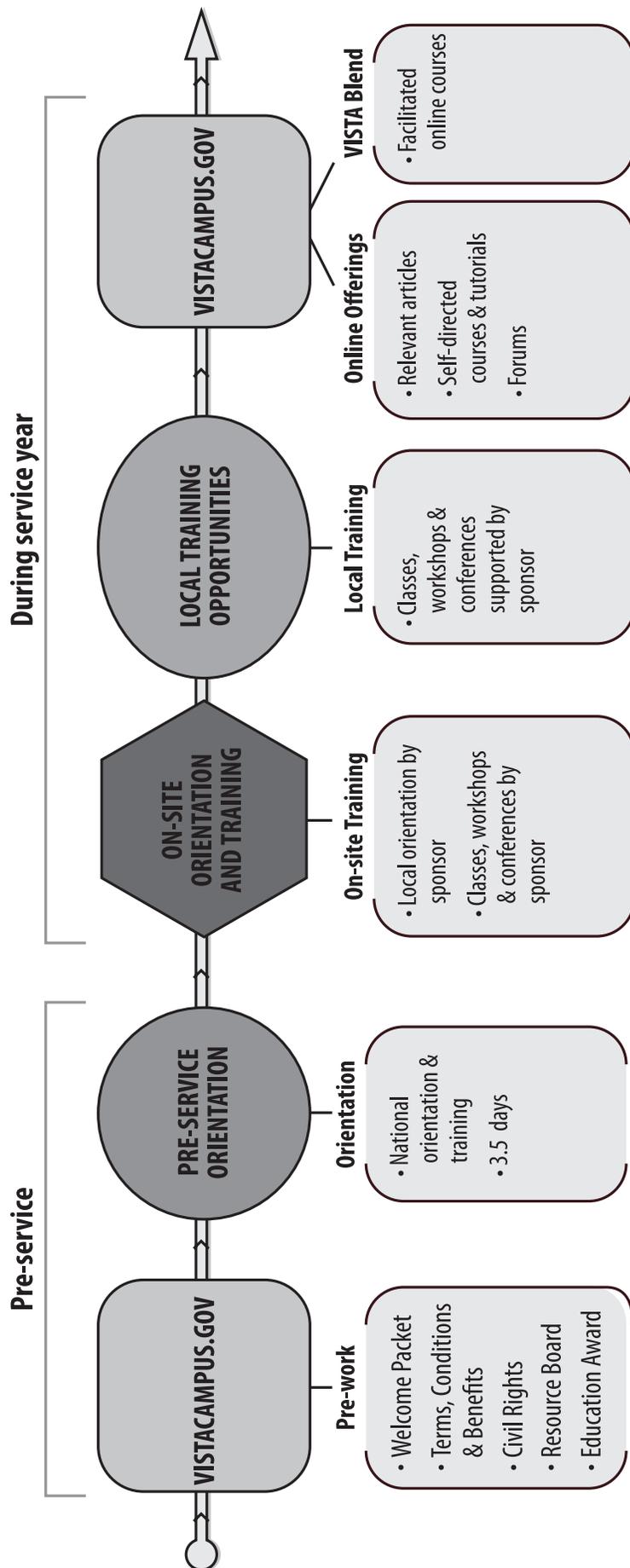
A few suggestions for VISTAs about entering a diverse community with cultural effectiveness:

- Practice listening and observing with openness and an ability to suspend assumptions and check personal lenses
- Recruit a cultural guide and coach
- Practice being affirming in the face of differences that challenge your comfort
- Commit to growing your understanding over time
- Commit to learning about the visible as well as the less visible, deeper aspects of every culture
- Understand that questions need to be posed in a culturally respectful manner
- Behave in a trustworthy manner; focus energies on building trust
- Be authentic and transparent about your intentions
- Apologize if you make a mistake
- Wait, ask permission (rather than demand)...
- Understand that negative responses you might receive might be because of prior history and prior offenses not caused by you
- Begin by focusing on the strengths and assets, rather than the challenges and problems
- Learn from your mistakes
- Steer clear of participating in perpetuating “community gossip”

Guidance for Working with a Cultural Coach or Guide

- Seek out someone who has credibility across the community
- Seek out someone who is bi-cultural or multi-cultural so that he or she can translate and interpret things for you; this will help you understand things in your terms
- Share your intentions and hopes with your coach
- Discuss with your coach the kinds of feedback that would be helpful for you to receive
- Make sure that this is a 2-way relationship, and that you are not just taking but giving consideration to your coach's needs
- Commit to regular check-in times so that you are being guided with some regularity
- Receive the feedback you are given with an open mind and open heart
- Work hard not to compromise the integrity of your coach within the community
- Share both successes and problems with your coach in a timely fashion
- Where appropriate, ask your coach to help make introductions for you

VISTA Training Continuum



OSOT Guidelines

Purpose

Onsite orientation and training (OSOT) is the second step in the VISTA member's training continuum. Its primary purpose is to build on concepts and knowledge introduced and developed at the Pre-Service Orientation. OSOT introduces the member to the sponsor, the community, and the goals and operation of the VISTA project, and provides the member the basic knowledge and skills he or she needs to get started on the project.

The scheduling of OSOT should be timely enough to provide the member with the immediate information and skills needed to begin the job, yet flexible enough to allow members to satisfy personal and adjustment needs.

Sponsor's Responsibility

Develop an OSOT plan that is consistent with project goals and that meets minimum desired outcomes.

- ▶ Submit OSOT plan to the Corporation for National and Community Service state program office 30 days prior to the Pre-Service Orientation (PSO)
- ▶ Involve the member in an ongoing evaluation of activities of OSOT and adjust plans, as necessary, to meet individual member's needs
- ▶ Evaluate OSOT and have written member and supervisory evaluations submitted to the Corporation state program office within five days of the completion of OSOT
- ▶ Begin process of defining in-service training needs based on OSOT outcomes and evaluation

Scope Planning Guide

The OSOT planning guide is intended to help you prepare a quality OSOT plan for submission to the Corporation state office and subsequent implementation with your new member(s). The guide details the minimum outcomes and components required by the VISTA program. It provides suggestions for planning and implementing your OSOT, as well as a sample list of low-cost resources that should be considered in preparing and carrying out your OSOT. Finally, the guide includes a sample OSOT plan that can be used as a reference.

Be sure to provide your new member an orientation on the basics of your organization, the community, and the project prior to launching into skill training. The extent to which your member needs orientation and training on the basics is relative to his or her particular background. But when you consider the normally complex scope of VISTA member assignments and the importance of measuring up to the community's needs, you cannot afford to take the basics for granted. You have to be confident that you have a reasonably knowledgeable member representing the sponsor and the Corporation for National and Community Service in the community of assignment.

Information is power. The more information the VISTA member has, the more likely the member is able to perform the activities necessary to reach project goals and address community needs. At the same time, you do not want to overwhelm the member with facts and details, just what he or she will need to build upon.

Enlist help in planning and implementing your OSOT. Talk to or assemble persons - other staff, neighborhood leaders, and members - for a "preliminary design" session to brainstorm your probable OSOT needs and resources. This group could decide what might be the minimum background information your member should understand to get started. You probably have identified persons who could tell your new VISTA member, in a classroom style or in a kitchen-table session, what is what in the community. If your organization or community group doesn't have this information right now, you will need to determine who can do the necessary research.

The communities that most VISTAs work with are complex and diverse. Help your VISTA understand the nuances of the community. Consider assigning someone(s) to act as the VISTA's cultural guide.

OSOT Guidelines (cont.)

Or you may determine that this “homework” - an experiential fact-finding mission - is exactly what you lay on your new recruits.

You may still have to enlist help to ask the right questions. These questions may include:

- ▶ Who runs the community?
- ▶ How do decisions get made?
- ▶ Are there political clubs or “in” groups?
- ▶ What has worked and not worked in this project or projects like it?
- ▶ How do ordinary citizens/neighbors influence decisions?
- ▶ How do we get and use key statistics to illustrate poverty-related issues such as truancy, crime, income, taxes, derelict house ownership, unemployment, and family violence?

You may also need to enlist help from such individuals as your friendly local librarian, a news reporter, or an involved member of the clergy to guide your members (and you) to the answers that are complete enough to be useful.

At the Pre-Service Orientation, VISTA emphasizes to attendees the importance of being flexible and dealing with ambiguity. However, lack of clarity depletes a member’s energy and morale, and can stall a project. OSOT is the time to settle false expectations that the VISTA member may bring to the assignment. It is also the time to describe your supervisory style and share your expectations of the member, if you haven’t already done so during the interview or during other conversations.

Besides outlining tasks and time tables, you want to establish and communicate your own team “code of the member.” To do this, you must first be clear yourself on the principles, policies, and requirements of VISTA by carefully reviewing your memorandum of agreement with the Corporation and the VISTA Member Handbook. In addition to laying out rules and regulations of VISTA service, the handbook describes VISTA’s approach to leadership and problem-solving in low-income, disadvantaged communities. This is an approach that you as a supervisor will need to apply to your situation and promote with your member.

With this as your starting point, you should carefully review with your member his or her VISTA Assignment Description and negotiate a clear understanding of any unwritten expectations. These may include what professional behavior and appearance are expected, whether special skills or interests they may bring can contribute to or distract from the member assignment, what the working hours will be, and what kinds of commitments occur after standard working hours and on weekends.

Suggested Orientation and Training Methods

The methods you use for your orientation and training may include:

- ▶ brainstorming, discussion, and negotiation between you and your member or with a larger team (e.g., with other project staff)
- ▶ interviews/discussions with key community leaders or even a random sample of residents/ beneficiaries
- ▶ homework - having a member review the project application and project plan that the sponsor submitted to the Corporation, the memorandum of agreement between the Corporation and the sponsor, and other pertinent organization position papers
- ▶ field trips with strategically assigned tasks the member needs to complete
- ▶ having your member shadow others doing the kind of work the member will be doing
- ▶ attendance at staff, advisory board, and community meetings asking other staff, colleagues with other organizations, and other experts to review their “tricks of the trade” or provide specific skill training
- ▶ one-on-one conversations to address questions the VISTA brought from PSO.

OSOT Guidelines (cont.)

- ▶ secure free- or low-cost skill training from various community resources such as:

- community colleges
- libraries
- community resource and technology centers
- trade associations
- community adult education programs

Outcomes for the VISTA Member from Onsite Orientation and Training

By the end of onsite orientation and training, your VISTA member should have gained:

- ▶ an understanding of common expectations and agreements for a working relationship including:
 - the supervisor's other roles and responsibilities
 - the supervisor's management style
 - meetings and interactions between member and supervisor
 - a clear understanding of the lines of communication between member and supervisor
 - a clear understanding of the support provided to the member
 - a clear understanding of the terms and conditions of VISTA service
 - a clear understanding of the chain of command
- ▶ an understanding of the culture and mission of the sponsoring organization, including:
 - its history
 - its mission
 - how it functions as a nonprofit, municipality, state, county, or federal entity
 - its role in the community
 - introductions to the staff
- ▶ knowledge of the bigger picture related to the VISTA project and the community, including:
 - the VISTA project and its history
 - how and where VISTA fits into it all
 - an introduction to the community
 - the socio-economic and political structure
 - potential resources that can be applied to achieve project goals
 - the history and status of community self-determination and problem-solving efforts

- ▶ an understanding of the organization's:

- roles and responsibilities
- time and attendance, duty hours
- annual leave
- sick leave
- mileage reimbursement policy and procedure
- working with the media
- fund-raising activities
- evaluation of the individual VISTA member and of the project
- reporting requirements for the VISTA project

- ▶ an understanding of his or her member assignment that:

- specifies tasks and activities for a specific period of time to accomplish the goals and objectives in the project member assignment
- specifies training needed for the assignment that builds upon Pre-Service Orientation, onsite orientation and training and close of service activities, and the personal and professional development of the VISTA member

- ▶ a better understanding of skills and knowledge needed to implement the member assignment:

- depending on the project, you may deem it necessary for the member to receive training in such areas as computer skills, public speaking, group facilitation, conflict resolution, needs assessment and asset mapping, proposal writing, negotiation and interviewing skills, etc.
- a member may need issue-area-specific training as well on such topics as domestic violence hotlines, early childhood literacy, laws regarding foster care, credit management, micro-enterprise development, etc.

These are just some examples of skills and training your member might need. His or her actual needs depend on the requirements of your project and the experience, skills, and educational background your member already possesses.

OSOT Guidelines (cont.)

Frequently Asked Questions

Why do OSOT?

A strong OSOT not only benefits the member, but also helps to assure that you won't have a poorly trained employee who negatively impacts your organization. The main beneficiary of a strong OSOT plan is the member. With the OSOT plan as a reference, the member will have an indication of what he or she can expect to be doing and what you expect to be accomplished during the orientation. You of course will establish a strong supervisory role from the outset, and can involve the member in preparing subsequent, spelled-out member assignment objectives for weekly or monthly review.

How long should OSOT last?

Your OSOT may last one week or it may last two, three, or four, depending on the needs of the project and community on the one hand, and the needs of your member on the other. The length and content may be determined, for example, by whether you are recruiting a member from the local community or from another town, city or state. Orientation and training length may be influenced by whether you are recruiting someone with previous experience on this or similar projects. Your project may be one that requires extensive skill training and/or experiential learning (e.g., requiring your new member to spend significant time shadowing others involved in the project or conducting field interviews). A nationally recruited member may need more time finding and securing housing, and getting to know the community prior to beginning skill training. These and other factors should be considered when you design your OSOT plan and determine how long your OSOT should last.

What's the timeframe for submitting an OSOT plan?

Your OSOT plan should be in the Corporation state office 30 days before the start of the PSO. The state office will review the plan for consistency with project goals, for technical quality, and for its potential for meeting desired OSOT outcomes. State office staff will discuss your plan with you prior to PSO.

Does a particular format have to be followed?

This OSOT planning guide is offered as technical assistance. You may send to the state office whatever format you are accustomed to using. A sample plan is attached for your reference; you may choose to use this format for your plan.

What about specific issues for locally recruited members?

All projects receiving a member should prepare and conduct an OSOT, even if the member is from the community he or she will be serving. It has been the experience of Corporation for National and Community Service staff, based on monitoring such projects that, even though your agency has recruited and interviewed a prospective member locally, there is a great need for initial orientation and training.

For instance, you will need to thoroughly discuss the specifics of their VISTA role, your agency functions, and your member's new relationship with the community. The member often will need to look at the community from a new perspective and may need help on redefining his or her role in the community. These individuals may not be familiar with the politics of the community, and in their new role, they need to know them. Finally, often locally recruited members have unique skill training needs to carry out their service effectively.

OSOT Guidelines (cont.)

What about specific issues for those recruited from outside the community being served?

Members recruited from other cities and states who relocate to their community of service may need very different kinds of orientation and training than locally recruited members. Keep in mind that members who are moving to significantly different environments from which they were raised and educated often experience “culture shock” and stressful transition and adaptation. You can help them through this transition by following these guidelines:

- ▶ Help ensure that these members’ basic needs are met before doing anything else. Helping them find housing, learn the local transportation system, and locate basic services (medical centers, dentists, supermarkets, laundromats, etc.) will provide incalculable dividends.
 - ▶ Introduce them to key community groups and individuals who can support them in their transition to their new home and life.
 - ▶ Give them ideas for and invitations to social activities that can help them feel more “at home.” You might want to host a reception and invite community leaders, board members, and program participants to meet the new additions to your organization. Or plan a day of community service activities, inviting board members and community leaders to meet new members. You might also submit a press release to local media about the arrival of your new VISTA members with human interest information about their assignments.
 - ▶ Give the new members a thorough orientation to the culture of the community they will be working in. The transition for the member who moves from a middle class suburb in one part of the United States to a low-income, inner-city neighborhood in another part of the country, or for one going from a thriving metropolis to a remote, poor, rural community can be like moving to a foreign country. “Culture shock” can often be overwhelming and even debilitating.
- In this area, enlist as much support from the community as possible to help the member understand the local culture, including:
- ▶ What’s the “language” of the community? How do people speak to one another both personally and professionally? How do people handle bi- and multi-lingual situations? How does one most effectively use translators, if needed?
 - ▶ What role do social events play in the community?
 - ▶ What is appropriate dress in different social situations and in professional situations?
 - ▶ What are the predominate religious practices and beliefs and how might they affect the community’s perceptions of the member and the project?
 - ▶ How are meetings conducted?
 - ▶ What are people’s perceptions and practices about time and timeliness?
 - ▶ What are people’s perceptions and practices around gender roles, cohabitation, and relationships?
 - ▶ What must a member do to ensure his or her safety?
 - ▶ How do things really get done? Who are the real movers and shakers, and how are they accessed and involved?

OSOT Checklist

Welcome to the community organization: Getting started

- Introduce member to the head of the organization (president/CEO/director). The head then briefly discusses the history and purpose of the organization, the project, and how the member fits in.
- Introduce member to co-workers during tour of facility.
- Show member his or her work area.
- Show location of rest rooms, lunch, and break rooms/space.
- Member attends regular staff meeting. Take time at staff meeting to remind everyone what the member's role will be. Help the member feel welcome and part of the team.
- Discuss basic terms of work, policies, procedures.
- Explain hours of work and overtime policies, holidays and leave days.
- Explain organization rules about absenteeism, tardiness, process for reporting absence or illness.
- Discuss timesheets, leave usage.
- Explain the VISTA compensation process.
- Explain break policy and lunch hour (tell about restaurants in area).
- Explain use of telephone, mail services, copier (security code), computer network, etc.
- Explain standards of conduct, including rules of dress, personal grooming, smoking, housekeeping, etc.
- Explain parking practices and provide (or arrange for) building, office keys.
- Explain safety procedures.
- Explain how to order supplies.

Tips for the first day

- Lunch with the member to make him or her feel at home.
- If the member has moved from another part of the country, ask how the transition is going and if you might help. Discuss housing situation, local shopping and services, banks, medical facilities, etc. If there is time at the end of the day, give member time to take care of some of these needs - everything related to housing, bank account, phone service, post office, etc.

OSOT Checklist (cont.)

Organizational purpose and mission and the VISTA project

- Discuss in more detail the mission, background, and purpose of the sponsoring organization.
- Explain history and purpose of the organization.
- Review organization mission, goals, and objectives.
- Review organization structure.
- Provide copy of organizational chart and review staff duties.
- Explain departmental and divisional functions, goals, teams and team structure, major projects.
- Explain the purpose of the VISTA project and role of the members.
- Explain project goals and objectives.
- Review past work of project if in year 2 or 3.
- Give the member time to read any materials given to him/her.

Member assignment, supervisory relationship, and community investigation

- Clarify individual member assignment(s), how goals will be achieved, and how the member's progress in achieving project objectives will be assessed.
- Review the VISTA Assignment Description, explain specific responsibilities.
- Important: Make it clear what the expected project outcomes are, what the member will help create and how it will help individuals or communities move out of poverty.
- Explain performance reviews (date for first review, frequency thereafter).
- Provide a copy of performance standards.
- Discuss performance expectations and standards and reporting requirements.
- Discuss specific performance objectives that will be reviewed during the initial period.
- Explain supervisory and support structure, communications, reporting, accountability.
- Discuss the working relationship between the member and direct supervisor, mutual expectations, communications style, work style, support needs, etc.
- Discuss and clarify communication procedures and practices.
- Review staff meeting and team meeting schedules.
- Explain steps in discipline procedure (verbal warning, written warning, etc.) and specify actions that result in disciplinary action.
- End on a positive, affirming note about how excited you are to have the member working on this project.
- Have the member interview other staff about work styles, communications, etc.

OSOT Checklist (cont.)

Tips for the first week

- Give the member time to take care of any additional basic needs related to, for example, housing, bank account, phone service, post office, etc. If a staff member is available to help, have her or him accompany the new member.
- Plan a lunch with a group of office colleagues.
- Plan a team building activity with staff, other members, project collaborators, other AmeriCorps members, etc.
- Plan a potluck dinner with office staff, other members, AmeriCorps and Senior Corps members, and VISTA alumni.
- Save time for check-ins to answer questions about the organization or project.
- Set up an Independent Community Investigation Activity where the member spends a half-day exploring the community and making a mental inventory of assets, needs, and cultural practices.

Directions:

- Schedule time with an expert on the community that the member will meet with after his observation.
- Brief the member before he or she heads out into the community about where to go, what to look for, and how to ensure safety.
- The member meets with the expert on the community discuss observations from the previous day.
- This community “expert” provides a background on the community during a more guided tour than the member’s previous day’s meanderings.
- The expert explains the nature of the low-income population served by the project.
- The expert introduces the member to community leaders, especially those involved in the VISTA project.
- The expert discusses cultural norms, do’s and don’ts, social outlets to enjoy and those to stay away from, etc.
- Have the member spend the afternoon with one or more partner organizations or other members and AmeriCorps state and national members involved in this or related projects.
- Supervisor discusses impressions and findings from the Independent Community Investigation Activity with the member including the implications these have for the project and the member’s assignment.

OSOT Checklist (cont.)

Skill development

- The member accompanies staff member for the whole day out of the office - conducting community interviews, recruiting volunteer participation in project, managing volunteers on project, etc.
- The member accompanies staff member of another organization involved in similar or complementary efforts for the whole day, conducting community interviews, recruiting volunteer participation in project, managing volunteers on project etc.
- Informational/collaboration interviews with representatives from a variety of community agencies.
- Member drafts a one-month, member assignment, with clear and detailed activities and reviews it with the supervisor.

Tips for the first month

- Have member spend time with a tech tutor or on their own learning or refining computer skills he will need (e.g., Microsoft Word, Excel, Publisher, Access) for producing flyers, pamphlets and posters; writing grant proposals; building or using contact databases; etc.
- Empower the member to begin independent implementation of project with frequent check-in sessions with supervisor and other key organization staff to see how the work is going. Supervisor makes it clear to the member that this third week is still a period of learning, practice, testing, and adapting. He should not worry about making mistakes, asking lots of questions, and experimenting.
- Set up additional skill training for the member as needed: For example, the member could participate in a public speaking class offered by the community continuing education program; learn from an experienced staff member the key components of a quality grant proposal; take an online tutorial about volunteer recruitment on the VISTA Campus (www.vistacampus.gov), or spend an afternoon with someone from the credit union to learn about the management of low-income loan programs, interest rates, and starting a small business.

Ongoing VISTA Member Training Opportunities

As a sponsoring organization, you will be expected to provide training opportunities for your VISTA members. Use this worksheet to capture our thinking as we discuss this topic.

VISTA Campus Courses and Resources (vistacampus.gov)

Free or reduced-cost trainings

Close-of-Service Training ideas

PSO Agenda

Opening Day/Night

1:30 – 6:00 pm	PSO Check-in and Registration	VISTA & AFYA Staff
5:30 – 6:30 pm	Dinner	
6:30 – 8:00 pm	VISTA Large Group Welcome Facilitator Introductions Logistics Review VISTA History and Legacy Table discussions: Video Response/VISTA Ethic	VISTA Staff, Cluster Training Coordinator (CTC), Facilitators

Day 1

7:00 – 8:15 am	Breakfast	
8:30 – 10:00 am	Your VISTA Development Plan (part 1)	Facilitators
10:00 – 10:15 am	Break	
10:15 am – 12:00 pm	Poverty in America: Personal Perspectives	Facilitators
12:00 – 1:00 pm	Lunch	
1:00 – 3:00 pm	Poverty Theories of Change	Facilitators
3:00 – 3:15 pm	Break	
3:15 – 4:30 pm	Navigating Your Year of Service	CNCS & VMSU Staff
4:30 – 5:30 pm	Optional Q&A with CNCS Staff	CNCS Staff
5:30 – 6:30 pm	Dinner	

PSO Agenda (cont.)

Day 2

7:00 – 8:15 am	Breakfast	
8:30 – 10:45 am	Getting Started with Your VAD	Facilitators
10:45 am – 12:00 pm	Communication Styles and Problem Solving	Facilitators
12:00 – 1:00 pm	Lunch with Supervisors	
1:00 – 2:00 pm	Communication Styles and Problem Solving (cont.)	Facilitators
2:00 – 4:15 pm	Volunteer Mobilization	Facilitators
5:30 – 6:30 pm	Dinner	

Day 3

7:00 – 8:15 am	Check out and breakfast	
8:30 – 10:30 am	Resource Development	Facilitators
10:30 – 10:45 am	Break	
10:45 am – 12:30 pm	Your VISTA Development Plan (part 2)	Facilitators
12:30 – 1:00 pm	Swearing-in Ceremony: Oath, Closing Remarks	VISTA Staff (large group)
1:00 pm	Box lunches and depart	

Poverty Resource List

Books:

- *Understanding Poverty* (2002) by Sheldon H. Danziger and Robert H. Haveman
- *The Working Poor: Invisible in America* (2005) by David K. Shipler
- *The State of Working America 2004/2005* (2005) by Lawrence Mishel, Jared Bernstein, Sylvia Allegretto (Economic Policy Institute)
- *Field Guide to the US Economy* (2006) by Johnathon Teller-Elsberg, Nancy Folbre, James Heintz (Center for Poplar Economics)
- *Without a Net: Middle Class and Homeless (With Kids) in America* (2006), by Michelle Kennedy
- *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (2001) by James Agee, Walker Evans
- *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) by John Steinbeck

Articles:

- “Relatively Deprived” by John Cassidy (*The New Yorker*, April 3, 2006)
- “Overcoming the Silence of Generational Poverty” by Dr. Donna M. Beegle (*Talking Points*, Oct/Nov 2003)
- “Getting to Why’ to solve for ‘How’: Kids in Poverty Now on Radar.” An extended interview with national expert Dr. Donna Beegle on breaking through the barriers of generational poverty. From *Northwest Education*, Fall 2004, <http://educationnorthwest.org/resource/1036>

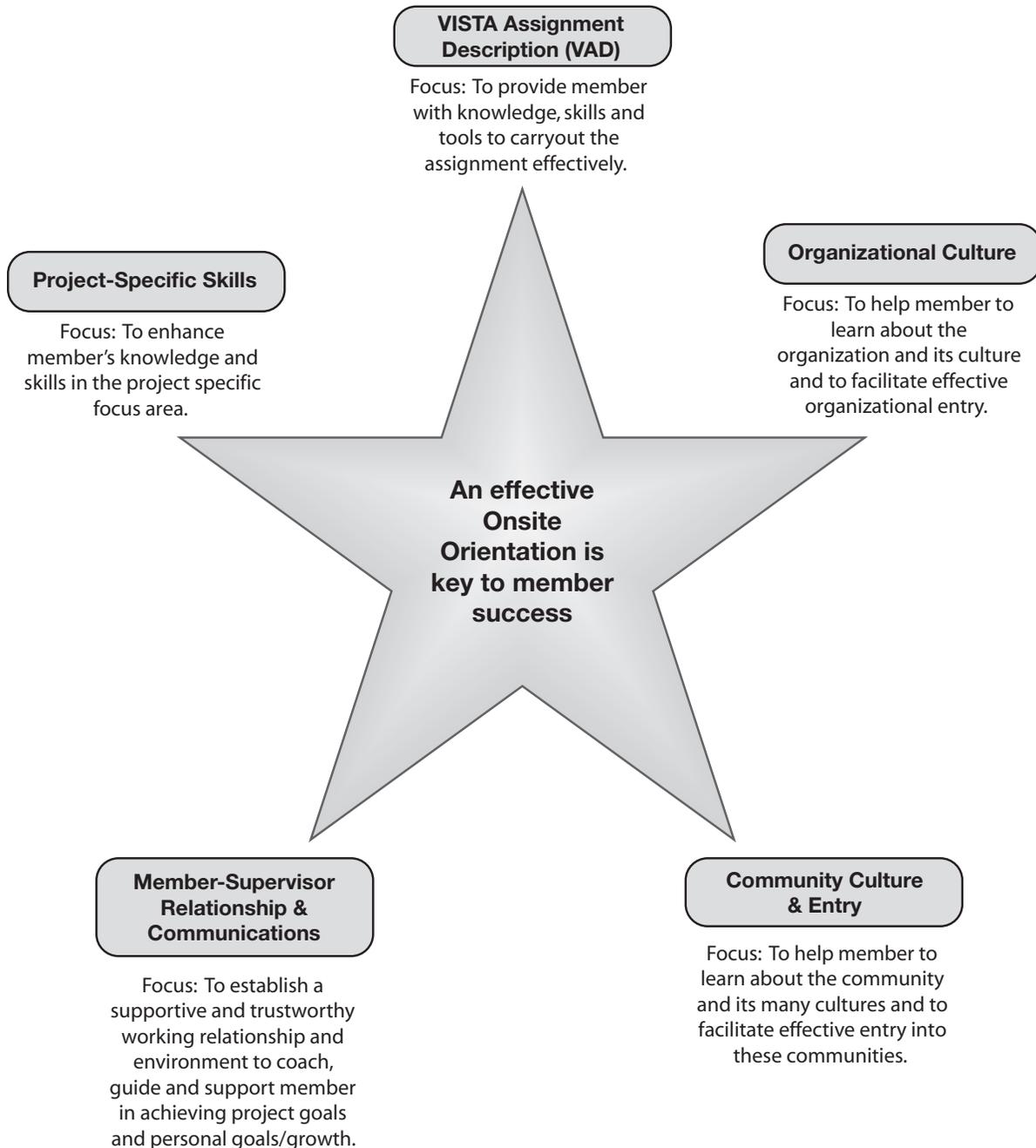
Web Sites:

- The US Census Bureau (www.census.gov)
- Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin-Madison (www.irp.wisc.edu)
- National Center for Children in Poverty (www.nccp.org)
- Dr. Donna Beegle’s Communication Across Barriers site (www.combarriers.com)
- To look up the latest on your community, go to <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/>. Enter the city, county or zip under “Data by Geography”. When demographic data appear, click “show more” next to the Social or Economic Characteristics for more information.
- Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) in your area, go to (www.idanetwork.org). Click on “IDA Directory” in the left column.

Qualities of an Effective and Meaningful Training

- Designed based on the learners' and projects' needs
- Takes learners' learning styles into consideration
- Outcomes-based
- Incorporates a variety of training activities to promote engaging and rich learning experiences
- Takes into consideration what the learner already brings to the learning context
- Is transparent and specific, so the learner is clear about the purpose, expectations and benefits of the training
- Promote active learner engagement to stimulate ownership and meaningful learning
- Incorporates a participant feedback mechanism to assess the effectiveness on an ongoing basis

Five-Point Onsite Orientation Framework



OSOT Themes and Activities Identification Worksheet

OSOT Dimension	Training Topic/Theme	Possible Activities	When
VAD	Example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervisor and Member Expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion or conversation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monday afternoon
Organizational Culture			

OSOT Themes and Activities Identification Worksheet (cont.)

OSOT Dimension	Training Topic/Theme	Possible Activities	When
Community Entry & Community Culture			

OSOT Themes and Activities Identification Worksheet (cont.)

OSOT Dimension	Training Topic/Theme	Possible Activities	When
<p><i>Member-Supervisor Relationships & Communications</i></p>			
<p><i>Project-Specific Skills</i></p>			

Onsite Orientation Template

Using the first three weeks to start off strong

WEEK ONE

Instructions: In each box in the calendar below, fill in the training topic, presenter, and/or method of training

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Morning					
Afternoon					

Onsite Orientation Template (cont.)

WEEK TWO

Instructions: In each box in the calendar below, fill in the training topic, presenter, and/or method of training

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Morning					
Afternoon					

Onsite Orientation Template (cont.)

WEEK THREE

Instructions: In each box in the calendar below, fill in the training topic, presenter, and/or method of training

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Morning					
Afternoon					

A version of this template can be downloaded from the VISTA Campus at http://vistacampus.org/file.php/50/Orienting/osot_template.doc

Training of Sub-site Supervisors Planning Activity

Discuss in small groups or with a partner:

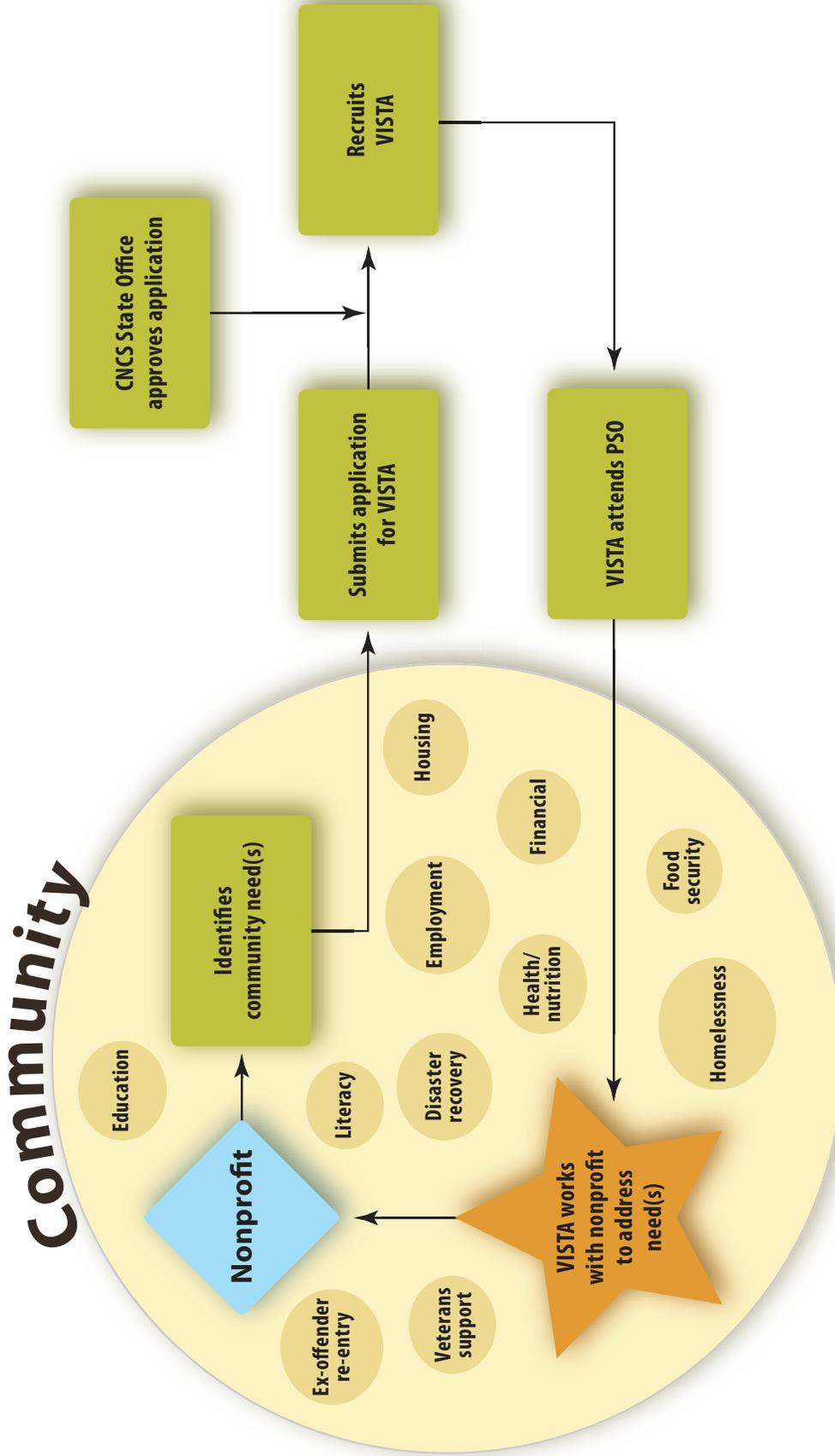
1. Who are your sub-site supervisors? Do they have a history with national service? What do they know about VISTA? What specific training and support will they need?
2. What VISTA topics have you learned about at this orientation that you want to share with them? Discuss your top 5.
3. What member-supervisor issues came up during the sessions on “Coaching” and “VISTA Supervisor Café” that you want to cover with your team?
4. How will you train your team? Are you co-located so you can do it in person? Or will you do it via webinar and conference calls? What tools do you need to put in place to train your team?
5. Will you do the training alone or do you have others to work with? If you are not someone with a lot of training experience, how can you get the support you need to train your team?
6. How might you use resources from the VISTA Campus supervisors’ section to train your sub-site supervisors? If you have a laptop, please go right to the Campus (<http://vistacampus.gov/supervisors>) and identify resources that you might want to use.

Plan your training:

Use the “Training of Sub-site Supervisor Planning Worksheet” to:

- Identify topics
- Plan activities
- Set a schedule for your training

How a Sponsor Gets a VISTA



Summary of Key Terms, Conditions, and Benefits of VISTA Service

VISTAs must: be **at least 18 years old; be US citizens, nationals, or legal residents**; and successfully complete a **criminal background check** which entails a search of the National Sex Offenders Registry and an FBI criminal history check.

VISTA is a 12-month, **full time commitment**. VISTAs are required to work an average of 40 hours per week, but may work in excess of that amount focusing on capacity-building activities. They usually serve within the work hours of their sponsoring organizations, but are expected to be available evenings and weekends to meet the needs of the project and community. A person may **serve up to five terms of service** in any combination of AmeriCorps service programs.

VISTAs receive a **living allowance** (direct deposited every two weeks), **health coverage**, and **10 personal and 10 sick leave days**. Additionally, all VISTAs receive **training and development opportunities** including a Pre-Service Orientation provided by CNCS and an onsite orientation provided by the sponsoring organization.

Based on the circumstances and/or wishes of the individual, a VISTA may receive some additional benefits including a **settling-in allowance** of up to \$550 for moving expenses, and **child care** allotment of up to \$400 per child, per month. VISTAs can elect to have **life insurance** and are covered by **workers compensation** for service related injuries. Some VISTAs will also benefit from **income exclusion** to continue public assistance they were receiving before joining VISTA. Finally, some VISTAs may be eligible for **tax benefits** such as the Earned Income Credit.

VISTAs can choose to receive either the **Education Award (\$5,550)** or an **End-of-Service-Stipend (\$1,500)** at the end of their VISTA service. A VISTA can not switch from the stipend to the education award, but can switch from the education award to the stipend before the end of his/her tenth month of service.

If a VISTA selects the **Education Award**, eligible student loans can be put into **forbearance** and have interest accrued during the service year paid by the Trust after the completion of service. The VISTA is responsible for the accrued interest, and must submit the **Interest Accrual Form** to the Trust in order to have the interest paid.

A percentage of Perkins Loan debt can be forgiven if the **End-of-Service-Stipend** is selected. **Deferment** may be granted based on economic hardship. Accrued interest is the responsibility of the VISTA.

When VISTAs satisfactorily complete one full year of service, they earn one year of **non-competitive eligibility (NCE)** status. NCE allows a federal agency to hire an AmeriCorps VISTA alumnus/alumna, who meets the minimum qualifications for a federal job, without going through all the formalities of the competitive process.

VISTA members **cannot be employed** in any other paid position while serving as a VISTA member.

VISTAs **are allowed to attend class(es)**; however their studies **must not interfere with VISTA responsibilities**. A VISTA must discuss taking class(es) with his/her supervisor before enrolling. The supervisor needs to agree that studies will not interfere with the VISTA project. If classes do interfere, the VISTA may be asked to either withdraw from the course within one week; or end VISTA service.

Any political advocacy, organizing, promotion, or demonstration while on VISTA duty, or while PERCEIVED to be on duty, is prohibited. This includes registering people to vote or driving people to the voting polls, engaging in any pro- or anti-labor organizing activities, lobbying, or taking any action with respect to a partisan or nonpartisan political activity that would result in the identification of the VISTA program with the activity.

VISTA members may **not conduct religious instruction**, engage in proselytizing, or other religious activities **as part of their duties**.

Hatch Act Limitations on VISTA Political Activities

Prohibitions on Political and Lobbying Activities – Updated 6/28/05

(Also found in the VISTA Member Handbook)

No appropriated funds of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) shall be used to finance, directly or indirectly, any activity designed to influence the outcome of an election to federal, state, or local office or a voter registration activity, or pay the salary of a CNCS employee who engages in such activity.

In addition, VISTA programs are prohibited from using funds or personnel in a matter supporting or resulting in the identification of such programs with partisan or nonpartisan election activities, in voter registration activities, and in providing transportation to the polls. Additionally, no VISTA member or employee of a sponsoring organization may take any action with respect to a partisan or nonpartisan political activity that would result in the identification or apparent identification of the AmeriCorps VISTA program with such activity (see 42 U.S.C. § 5043 for additional restrictions and prohibitions).

VISTA programs also are prohibited from any activity intended to influence the passage or defeat of legislation or proposals by initiative petition (see 42 U.S.C. § 5043 (c) for additional restrictions and prohibitions).

You may participate in political activities allowed under the Hatch Act. The Domestic Volunteer Service Act at 42 U.S.C. § 5055 applies the restrictions of the Hatch Act, Title V, United States Code, Chapter 73, to VISTA members. The Hatch Act applies to you at all times during your service, including off duty hours. Permissible activities under the Hatch Act apply to VISTA members unless these activities are prohibited by other statutory authority when the members are on authorized leave or are not perceived to be performing as a VISTA member (e.g., while not engaged in performing service, or on service time).

You have the right to register and vote as you choose, express opinions about candidates and issues in a non-public context, contribute money to political organizations, and attend political meetings. You also may join and be a member of a political party or club, and sign nominating petitions if you do not identify these activities with VISTA or your sponsoring organization.

CNCS regulations that prohibit electoral and lobbying activities are contained in 45 CFR Part 1226 (see Appendix C). The approach of the regulations is twofold: 1) Restrictions on the assignment of VISTA members to, or restrictions on the receipt of CNCS funds by, certain organizations because of the nature of the organizations or their activities; and 2) Restrictions on member assignments and activities.

The organizational restrictions are based on the premise that the assignment of members or the receipt of CNCS funds by certain organizations (regardless of the proposed assignment or activity of the member) is precluded because of the organization's stated purpose or the nature of its activities.

The restrictions on member assignments and activities contain four basic areas of prohibited activities:

1) Electoral; 2) Voter registration, except that programs assisted under this Act may make voter registration information available to the public on the premises of such programs; 3) Voter transportation to the polls; and 4) Efforts of influence legislation. The prohibitions are directed to the use of CNCS funds, the assignments of members, and any other activities supported by CNCS funds.

The Domestic Volunteer Service Act provides two exceptions to the prohibitions on efforts to influence legislation: 1) At the request of a legislative body, committee, or member of a legislative body, and 2) Regarding an authorization or appropriation measure directly affecting the operation of the project or program.

The regulation, found at 45 CFR Part 1226, describes the conditions under which activities pursuant to these exceptions were once undertaken. The regulation also describes the applicability of the restrictions to sponsoring organization employees and the obligations of sponsoring organizations to ensure observance of the regulation. Appropriation laws have restricted these exceptions and activities permitted in 45 CFR Part 1226. Consequently, you must **contact your CNCS State Office before you engage in any political or lobbying activity.**

VISTA Leaders

VISTA Leaders are former VISTAs who successfully completed a full year of VISTA service and demonstrated exemplary skills and leadership in community service.

About 165 VISTA leaders serve each year throughout the country with projects that support economic opportunity, education, access to food resources and more for economically disadvantaged individuals.

Mission of VISTA Leaders

VISTA leaders support and coordinate larger VISTA projects (involving at least eight VISTAs) in their efforts to address the needs of low-income communities. They serve as role models, trainers, and resource providers who strengthen the capacity of VISTAs and VISTA projects. They serve different functions depending on the needs of the local projects, like recruiting and coordinating VISTAs; preparing in-service trainings; identifying new funding sources; and serving as liaisons with the community and the Corporation for National and Community Service.

Goals of the VISTA Leader Program

- Foster greater communications between VISTAs and their project sponsor, and among VISTAs within a state and a cluster.
- Provide additional support for VISTA members.
- Provide an extended service opportunity for outstanding VISTAs who demonstrate leadership abilities.
- Promote leadership skills in the service and nonprofit field.

Responsibilities of a VISTA Leader

Specific responsibilities vary, but most VISTA leaders are involved in developing or expanding a new or existing VISTA project. Leaders help recruit, screen, and train VISTA members. They coordinate VISTAs and develop monitoring, reporting, and project management systems. Leaders promote information sharing; create a VISTA support network; develop in-service training workshops; conduct site visits; and create model programs. Many write grants, fundraise, and conduct broad-based public awareness campaigns. In general, they set an example of leadership for VISTAs; ensure positive relations, facilitate idea sharing, and mediate issues with the community, the project, supervisors, and VISTA members.

VISTA Leaders do not supervise VISTAs (or other CNCS-supported National Service Participants or volunteers). They are prohibited from preparing VISTA project applications or applying for other CNCS grants. They are also prohibited from preparing and submitting progress reports, although they often assist in gathering information from VISTAs and local site supervisors.

Requesting a VISTA Leader

Corporation State Offices discuss the opportunity to place a VISTA leader with project sponsors. Coordination and planning should begin as the project is being developed or renewed for another year. Sponsors must request a leader by including a specific position description in their project application to the State Office. If the need for a leader develops after the project application has been approved, the assignment description should be submitted to the State Office for approval and the project application should be amended accordingly. The assignment description should also be used as a tool for recruiting.

Application Process

Once a Leader position is approved, the sponsor creates an opportunity listing for the position in the My AmeriCorps portal.

A VISTA who wishes to serve as a leader must complete and submit an application to that listing through the My AmeriCorps portal. The project sponsor reviews applications, conducts interviews, and selects a final applicant for the leader position.

VISTA Leaders (cont.)

Selection of a Leader

VISTA leaders are carefully selected on the basis of their service performance in VISTA and their ability to communicate well with their peers. They are selected by the project sponsor and approved by the State Office. Only VISTAs who have completed at least one year of VISTA service with strong recommendations, outstanding performance, and demonstrated leadership ability are eligible to serve. VISTA leaders are placed throughout the year.

Placement of a Leader

A specific assignment description for each leader is developed by the project sponsor and submitted to the Corporation State Office. The sponsor reviews applications, conducts interviews (either by telephone or in person) and selects an applicant to serve as leader. The Corporation state office places the applicant into the VISTA leader position.

Training

VISTA leaders have three training opportunities during their year: VISTA Leader Orientation, Professional Development Webinars and the Action Learning Challenge. They can also receive one-on-one coaching from the leader training team. Leaders also have access to a large collection of resources devoted to them on the VISTA Campus.

All VISTA Leaders attend the VISTA Leader Orientation, preferably within the first three months of starting their leader year. The orientation is designed to enhance and reinforce the leaders' understanding of important leadership capacities and the six VISTA leader roles — mentor, ambassador, liaison, facilitator & educator, recruiter, and resource developer.

After completing the orientation, leaders can participate in monthly skill-building webinars on topics that enrich their professional and personal growth. Leaders also have the opportunity to apply for an Action Learning Challenge, an immersion-learning model that is designed to enhance professional skills through meeting a significant goal that will positively influence the future of the VISTA program.

To learn more about VISTA leader training opportunities go to the leaders area of the VISTA Campus.

Length of Service

An individual may serve a total of five full-year terms in VISTA. Technically, then, a VISTA leader could serve a maximum of four years if the individual performed outstandingly and the state office agrees that it benefits the project.

Comparison of VISTA Leader and Supervisor Roles

Because of their inherent skills and abilities, VISTA Leaders often take on more responsibility or receive more authority than is reasonable or appropriate. Keeping focused and within the limits of the Leader's roles are crucial to the Leader's success. To this end, regular communication between the Supervisor and the Leader is highly effective. It is imperative that VISTAs understand the distinctions between a Supervisor and Leader, and know to whom to turn for what they need. Co-facilitating a discussion with the VISTAs, and perhaps providing a reference sheet about procedures and points of contact are effective methods for Supervisors and Leaders to keep VISTAs informed.

Table 1. Examples of Appropriate Leader and Supervisor Roles

Conducting an On-Site Orientation and Training (OSOT)	
<p>Leader Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collate orientation materials • Draft agenda • Help to secure guests, speakers and facilitators • Participate in implementation of OSOT • Utilize facilitator / educator skills to achieve OSOT activities 	<p>Supervisor Contribution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop OSOT plan • Finalize agenda • Ensure the OSOT plan is submitted to the CSO • Help to secure guests, speakers and facilitators • Coordinate with leader re: OSOT • Implement OSOT
Recruiting and selecting new VISTAs	
<p>Leader Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote position announcement through local venues • Assist in screening applications • Assist in setting up and participate in interviews of top applicants • Provide feedback to supervisor • Utilize VAD in interview process • Utilize recruiting and interview skills to achieve recruiting tasks 	<p>Supervisor Contribution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview top candidates • Nominate candidates for selection and approval by the CSO • Notify candidates of their selection and approval • Ensure paperwork is completed • Accept/select candidates in eGrants/Portal • Utilize VAD in interview / selection process
Facilitating a successful year of service for VISTAs	
<p>Leader Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make self available to VISTAs as a resource • Listen when VISTAs approach with problems and barriers • Assist VISTAs in identifying their options and creating their own solutions • Assist VISTAs in outlining their options for mediation, including informing supervisor • Involve the supervisor if the VISTAs cannot resolve the issue themselves • Utilize skills as resource generator, mentor, ambassador and liaison, as appropriate, to ensure a successful year for VISTAs 	<p>Supervisor Contribution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide ongoing and scheduled supervision to VISTAs • Utilize problem-solving and coaching techniques to help VISTAs resolve problems and barriers • Assist VISTAs in identifying options and solutions • Develop protocol for addressing conflict within group (including the Leader's role) • Schedule appropriate conference time with leader for updates and feedback

Comparison of VISTA Leader and Supervisor Roles (cont.)

A VISTA is habitually late	
<p>Leader Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the VISTAs know and understand the policy and procedures for punctuality and project schedule(s) • If pattern persists and the supervisor is unaware, communicate problem to supervisor and inform VISTAs of same • Let supervisor know if tardiness of the VISTAs is a potential or real divisive issue for the team. • Utilize educator and liaison skills for achieving this task 	<p>Supervisor Contribution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss with the VISTA the reasons for the recent tardiness and explore how to improve punctuality • Set /re-set timeliness expectations • Determine any organizational measures to be taken to address the situation • Notify the CSO, if the situation merits • Follow-up with VISTA regarding effectiveness of corrective action • Coordinate with leader as needed regarding VISTA
Reporting on project performance to CSO	
<p>Leader Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate collection of data from VISTAs • Clarify points in reports with VISTAs if required • Collate or categorize information • Assist in interpretation of data • Coordinate feedback with Supervisor 	<p>Supervisor Contribution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain data from leader • Interpret data • Write report in eGrants • Ensure timeliness of reporting to CSO • Follow-up with leader and/ or VISTAs as necessary
Developing or refining Volunteer Assignment Description (VAD)	
<p>Leader Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review VADs for clarity and accuracy • Suggest improvements or changes to supervisor • Clarify action steps for VISTAs when required • Offer feedback to VISTAs and supervisor to determine if tasks appropriately help achieve objectives • Utilize facilitator, educator, mentor skills on an ongoing basis to ensure successful implementation of VAD 	<p>Supervisor Contribution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish tasks to achieve goal(s) • Write VAD • Review VAD with VISTA on a consistent basis • Monitor achievement of objectives by setting appropriate expectations for progress and completion • Refine VAD as necessary on an ongoing basis • Identify needed feedback from leader related to VAD progress

VISTA Leaders and eGrants Accounts

VISTA Leaders may be given the role of Grantee Recruiter in My AmeriCorps, through eGrants, to support a project sponsor's recruitment activities. For a list of user roles, please visit <http://nationalserviceresources.org/files/Whats-My-Role-eGrants-My-AmeriCorps-User-Roles-for-VISTA-Programs.pdf>.

In the role of Grantee Recruiter, a VISTA Leader is able to edit service opportunity listings, search for and contact VISTA member candidates, and review applications.

Although the role of Grantee Recruiter allows the user to approve or reject applications, a Leader may not do so. Only a project manager or supervisor may approve or reject applications.

In addition, VISTA Leaders may not access eGrants to work on project-management tasks—progress reports, V-81 approvals, etc—as this is a project staff function. Under no circumstance can a Leader have “grantee,” “grantee administrator,” or any other eGrants roles assigned to them. Failure to comply with these provisions by a project sponsor or Leader can lead to project closure.

To hold the role of Grantee Recruiter, the Leader must apply for a separate eGrants account and the Grantee Administrator for the project may then approve the request by assigning the role of Grantee Recruiter to the Leader.

VISTA Leaders may not use their supervisors' accounts and passwords.

Steps to create an eGrants account can be found on pgs. 6-11 in the My AmeriCorps User Guide located here: http://nationalserviceresources.org/files/MyAmeriCorps-User-Guide_VISTA-Sponsors-R3_7-24-09_.pdf.

If there are any questions or concerns regarding VISTA Leaders, please contact your state office or email vlader@cns.gov.

Income Disregard Provisions Memo

January 1, 2007

**MEMORANDUM TO NATIONAL SENIOR SERVICE CORPS STAFF
VISTA STAFF
CORPORATION STATE OFFICE STAFF**

FROM: Frank R. Trinity
General Counsel

SUBJECT: Senior Companions, Foster Grandparent, Retired and Senior Volunteer and VISTA Programs – Income Disregard Provisions

It continues to come to our attention that state and local governments, and on occasion federal entities, are not properly applying federal law governing the disregard of payments to Senior Companions, Foster Grandparent, Retired and Senior volunteer and VISTA members when determining eligibility for assistance and benefits.

Section 404 of the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973, as amended, (DVSA), states, in relevant part, as follows:

(f)(1) Notwithstanding any other provision of law except as may be provided expressly in limitation of this subsection, payments to volunteers under this Act shall not in any way reduce or eliminate the leave of or eligibility for assistance or services any such volunteers may be receiving under any governmental program, except that this paragraph shall not apply in the case of such payments when the Director determines that the value of all such payments, adjusted to reflect the number of hours such volunteers are serving, is equivalent to or greater than the minimum wage then in effect under the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 (29 U.S.C. § 201 et seq.) or the minimum wage, under the laws of the State where such volunteers are serving, whichever is greater.

(f)(2) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a person enrolled for full-time service as a volunteer under Title I of this Act who was otherwise entitled to receive assistance or services under any governmental program prior to such volunteer's enrollment shall not be denied such assistance or services because of such volunteer's failure or refusal to register for, seek, or accept employment or training during the period of such service.

Income Disregard Provisions Memo (cont.)

42 U.S.C. § 5044 (f)(1) and (2).

In a few cases, government agencies have erroneously attempted to substitute their judgments for the DVSA's authority in determining under (f)(1) if payments to participants are equivalent to or greater than the applicable minimum wage. Only the Corporation for National and Community Service may make this determination, and to date payments to participants under this Title have not been determined to exceed the federal or state minimum wage, whichever is greater.

Section 418 of the DVSA also states as follows:

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no payment for supportive services or reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses made to persons serving pursuant to Title II of this Act shall be subject to any tax or charge or be treated as wages or compensation for the purposes of unemployment, temporary disability, retirement, public assistance, workers' compensation, or similar benefit payments, or minimum wage laws. This section shall become effective with respect to all payments made after the effective date of this Act [October 1, 1973]. 42 U.S.C. § 5058

In summary, (1) a government program may not consider payments to individuals under the DVSA in determining to reduce or eliminate the individual's level of or eligibility for public assistance or services; (2) entitlements to assistance may not be denied because of a participant's failure or refusal to seek or accept employment or training, including those established for welfare to work programs; and (3) no payments to participants shall be considered wages or unemployment for the purposes of any tax, unemployment, workers' compensation, or for similar benefit payments.

In addition, the legislative history concerning this matter indicates that Congress did not want to damage efforts to recruit participants by reducing or eliminating government assistance for them and placing financial burdens on sponsors of the programs.

This memorandum should be forwarded to anyone with questions concerning this matter. In the event this memorandum does not resolve the issue, please contact this office immediately.

AmeriCorps VISTA Project Report Supplement

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

The Corporation for National and Community Service provides the VISTA Progress Report Supplement (VPRS) as an addendum to the regular quarterly progress report required of organizations approved to sponsor a VISTA project. The VPRS is submitted on an annual basis and is intended to cover activities over a single fiscal year, regardless of the individual program year. The VPRS is the vehicle through which projects submit specific data elements needed by the Corporation to report on performance. Corporation personnel will use the reports to track Corporation and VISTA specific performance measures on an annual basis.

COMPLETION AND SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

All VISTA projects are required to submit the VPRS once per year.

The project supervisor should complete the VPRS.

AmeriCorps VISTA members should be allowed to review the completed reports, but should not be required to complete the report.

REPORTING PERIOD

All VPRS submissions are due upon completion of the fiscal year.

Reporting period covers October 1 through September 30. The due date is October 31.

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

See the Performance Measures Guidance for AmeriCorps VISTA for terms and definitions. The terms have very specific definitions and by reporting against any of them, you are indicating that you are in compliance with those definitions.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES – CAPACITY BUILDING

Please enter a whole number in those measures applicable to your AmeriCorps VISTA project. You must provide data for at least one measure.

- Dollar value of cash resources leveraged by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants
- Dollar value of in-kind resources leveraged by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants
- Number of community volunteers recruited by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants
- Hours of service contributed by community volunteers who were recruited by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants
- Number of community volunteers managed by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants

AmeriCorps VISTA Project Report Supplement (cont.)

- Hours of service contributed by community volunteers who were managed by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants
- Number of veterans and military family members engaged in providing services through CNCS-supported programs
- Number of staff and community volunteers that received training (of one or more types) as a result of capacity-building services provided by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants
- Number of organizations that received capacity-building services from CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants
- Number of organizations that completed a community assessment identifying goals and recommendations with the assistance of CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants
- Number of organizations implementing three or more effective volunteer management practices as a result of capacity-building services provided by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants
- Number of organizations reporting that capacity-building activities provided by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants have helped to make the organization more efficient
- Number of organizations reporting that capacity-building activities provided by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants have helped to make the organization more effective
- Number of new systems and business processes (technology, performance management, training, etc.) or enhancements to existing systems and business processes put in place as a result of capacity-building services provided by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants
- Number of organizations that have experienced an increase in requests for their programs and services as a result of capacity-building services provided by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants
- Number of additional activities completed and/or program outputs produced by the program as a result of capacity-building services provided by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants in:
 - (a) Disaster Services
 - (b) Economic Opportunity
 - (c) Education
 - (d) Environmental Stewardship
 - (e) Healthy Futures
 - (f) Veterans and Military Families

AmeriCorps VISTA Project Report Supplement (cont.)

- Number of additional types of services offered by organizations as a result of capacity-building services provided by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants in:
 - (a) Disaster Services
 - (b) Economic Opportunity
 - (c) Education
 - (d) Environmental Stewardship
 - (e) Healthy Futures
 - (f) Veterans and Military Families

PERFORMANCE MEASURES – BENEFICIARIES

Please enter a whole number for any measure(s) that apply to your project. Please review the Guidance. Not all projects will have data for these measures.

- Number of disadvantaged youth receiving services provided by CNCS-supported organizations or national service participants in:
 - (a) Disaster Services
 - (b) Economic Opportunity
 - (c) Education
 - (d) Environmental Stewardship
 - (e) Healthy Futures
 - (f) Veterans and Military Families
- Number of veterans that received CNCS-supported assistance
- Number of veterans' family members that received CNCS-supported assistance
- Number of family members of active-duty military that received CNCS-supported assistance
- Number of military service members that received CNCS-supported assistance

Managing Your VISTA Project – Contacts and Resources

Websites to Explore and Bookmark

VISTA Campus

vistacampus.gov

VISTA Home

www.americorps.gov/about/programs/vista.asp

VISTA 101

vistacampus.org/mod/resource/view.php?id=10385

Corporation for National and Community Service

www.nationalservice.gov

My AmeriCorps

my.americorps.gov

Project Support/Policy & Procedure

Your Corporation State Office

www.americorps.gov/about/contact/stateoffices.asp

Supervisor section of the VISTA campus

vistacampus.org/course/view.php?id=50&page=117

VISTA Member Handbook

vistacampus.org/mod/book/view.php?id=2093

Member Support

My AmeriCorps: recruitment, in-processing documents, education award, allowance and tax statements
my.americorps.gov

Service and Inclusion

www.serviceandinclusion.org

VISTA Member Support Unit (VMSU): travel, living allowances, benefits, emergencies

Questions.NationalService.gov or 800-942-2677

Training & Development

VISTA Campus: interactive tutorials, documents and community forums for VISTA members, leaders & supervisors
vistacampus.gov

National Service Knowledge Network

www.nationalserviceresources.org

VISTA Viewfinder

vistacampus.org/course/view.php?id=18

Performance Measurement

AmeriCorps VISTA Performance Measurement

<http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/npm/vista>

National Performance Measurement Skill Building Activities

<http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/npm/practicum-overview>

Benefits

Seven Corners & Member Health Care Guide

americorps.sevencorners.com or 866-699-4186

GAP Solutions, Inc. (Child Care)

www.americorpschildcare.com or 855-886-0687

Post Service Resources

VISTA Alumni

www.americorps.gov/for_individuals/alumni

AmeriCorps Alums

www.americorpsalums.org

What's Next (Life After Service)

encorps.nationalserviceresources.org/whatsnext

Segal AmeriCorps Education Award

edaward.org

Social Networking

Facebook

www.facebook.com/AmeriCorpsVISTAAlumni

Twitter

twitter.com/vistabuzz

VISTA Forums

vistacampus.org/course/view.php?id=20

V is for !

vistacampus.org/course/view.php?id=25

General Information

National Service Partners

www.nationalservice.gov

National Service Hotline

Questions.NationalService.gov or 800-942-2677

VISTA Campus

vistacampus.gov

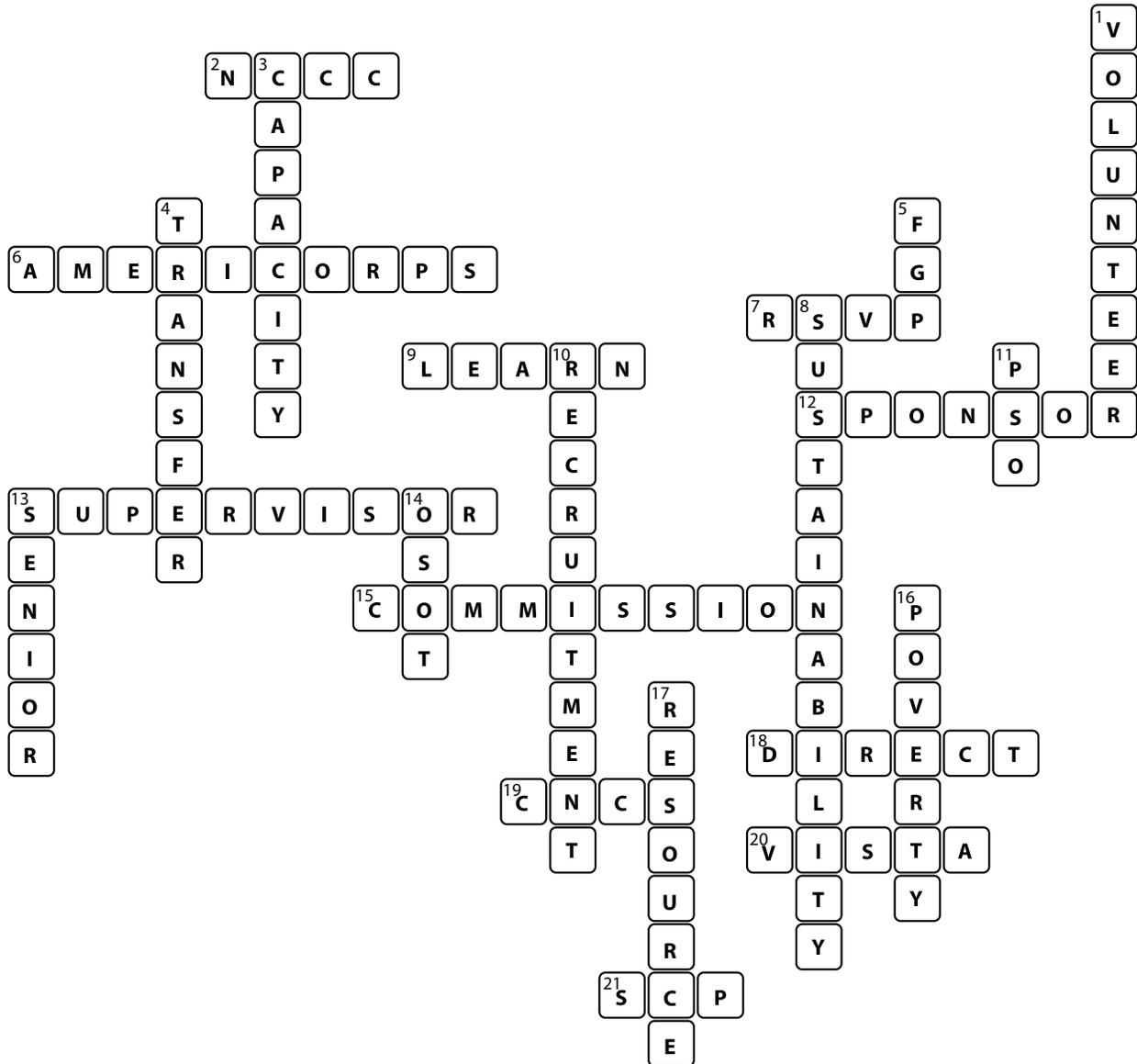
VISTA Campus Resources from Supervisor Orientation At-A-Glance

Session	Resources
Supervisor Roles	<p>Supervisor Orientation Workbook and Worksheets http://vistacampus.gov/sups-role > Choose "Resources & Contacts"</p> <p>VISTA Member Handbook http://vistacampus.gov/member-handbook</p>
Capacity Building	<p>VISTA Supervisors Orientation Visual Aids http://vistacampus.gov/sups-role > Choose "Working with Sub-sites"</p> <p>Mingle & Match Game http://vistacampus.gov/sups-role > Choose "Resources & Contacts"</p> <p>AmeriCorps VISTA History and Legacy video http://vistacampus.gov/sups-role > Choose "Working with Sub-sites"</p> <p>VISTA Performance Measures http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/npm/vista http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/npm/practicum-overview</p>
Managing Your VISTA Project	<p>Managing Your VISTA Project presentation http://vistacampus.gov/sups-role > Choose "The Big Picture"</p>
The VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)	<p>Creating Effective VADs Tutorial http://vistacampus.gov/supervisors > Choose "The VISTA Assignment" > "Writing & Adapting VADs"</p> <p>eGrants & MyAmeriCorps Support https://www.nationalserviceresources.org/myamericorps-support-ameri-corps-vista-programs</p>
VISTA Supervisor Café	<p>Food for Thought Packets http://vistacampus.gov/sups-role > Choose "Working with Sub-sites"</p> <p>"I Want to Serve Because ..." tutorial http://vistacampus.gov/supervisors > Choose "Recruiting" > "Successful VISTA Traits"</p> <p>VISTA Forums http://vistacampus.gov > Choose "VISTAs" > "Connect with VISTAs" > "VISTA Forums"</p>

VISTA Campus Resources from Supervisor Orientation At-A-Glance (cont.)

Session	Resources
Coaching	<p>Coaching and Supporting VISTAs http://vistacampus.gov/supervisors > Choose "Coaching and Supporting" Examples of what you will find:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core Competencies of a Supervisor Tutorial • Supervisor Coaching Scenarios Tutorial • National Service Stress Survival Guide
Recruiting and Interviewing	<p>Recruiting http://vistacampus.gov/supervisors > Choose "Recruiting" Examples of what you will find:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building a Foundation for a Diverse Team • Using MyAmeriCorps • Considerations for Rural/Village Local VISTA Recruitment • Criminal History Checks-Sponsor Responsibilities • VISTA Acceptance Letter Sample
Orientation and Training	<p>Orienting your VISTA http://vistacampus.gov/supervisors > Choose "Orienting your VISTA" Examples of what you will find:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-Service Orientation Workbook • Three-Week Sample Agenda • Difference Between VISTAs and Employees • Icebreakers for Orientation <p>Working with Sub-sites http://vistacampus.gov/sups-role > Choose "Working with Sub-sites" Examples of what you will find:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervisor Orientation Visual Aids (Power Point slides) • Working with Sub-sites Course <p>VISTA Blend www.vistacampus.gov/vistablend</p>

VISTA Supervisor Crossword Puzzle – Key



VISTA Campus: Supervisors

vistacampus.gov

Support and train supervisors across multiple sites



In the **"Life as a Supervisor"** area of the Campus learn about...

- Working with Sub-sites
- Recruiting Members
- Writing or Adapting VADS
- Coaching & Supporting VISTAs

<http://vistacampus.gov/supervisors>



"VISTA 101: Understanding VISTA" is a resource to educate sub-sites about the VISTA program and what it has to offer.

<http://vistacampus.gov/v101>

Manage projects & members



The **"Roles and Responsibilities"** page of the **"Life as a Supervisor"** area will give you resources on...

- Reporting & Evaluation
- Member Policies
- Resources & Contacts

<http://vistacampus.gov/sups-role>



Find background information, policies, and processes to manage projects and members.

- **VISTA Member Handbook**
<http://vistacampus.gov/member-handbook>
- **Supervisors Manual**
<http://vistacampus.gov/sups-manual>