



**AMERICORPS*VISTA
PROJECT APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS**

PART I. SF 424 AND CERTIFICATIONS & ASSURANCES FORMS

THIS IS A STANDARD FORM USED BY APPLICANTS AS A REQUIRED FACE SHEET FOR PRE-APPLICATIONS AND APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE. INSTRUCTIONS FOR PART I AND PART V. ARE PROVIDED SEPARATELY.

PLEASE NOTE:

BOX 15. ESTIMATED FUNDING: Please refer to the specific budget instructions provided along with your application instructions.

PART II. PROJECT NARRATIVE

- A. Executive Summary
- B. Summary of Accomplishments
- C. Needs and Activities
- D. Strengthening Communities
- E. Recruitment and Development
- F. VISTA Assignment Description
- G. Program Management
- H. Organizational Capacity
- I. Other

PART III. PROJECT PLAN

PART IV. ATTACHMENTS

PART V. BUDGET FORM AND NARRATIVE

Note: The Corporation for National and Community Service Selection Criteria is:

Program Grant Projects

Program Design (60%)
Part II, sections C, D, E, and F.

Organizational Capacity (25%)
Part II, sections G and H

Budget/Cost Effectiveness (15%)

PART II. PROJECT NARRATIVE

Instructions

The purpose of the project narrative is for you to provide a clear and compelling justification for awarding the requested AmeriCorps*VISTA members and/or Leaders.

Because this application serves the needs of all Corporation for National and Community Service programs, AmeriCorps*VISTA applicants are not required to complete all sections. Be sure to use the section headings and lettering and numbering provided below when completing your project narrative.

Be sure to:

- Submit a completed Face Sheet (SF424 – Application for Federal Assistance) with your project narrative.
- Type, single-spaced.
- Try to keep your response for each section heading to no more than one page (250-400 words).

A. Executive Summary

Provide a brief narrative of your proposed AmeriCorps*VISTA project, including population to be served, issue areas, history of your organization's activities in these issue areas, and the type of service activities you expect the AmeriCorps*VISTA members to accomplish.

B. Summary of Accomplishments (For Current AmeriCorps*VISTA Sponsoring Organizations Only)

First time applicants: please leave blank. Current AmeriCorps*VISTA sponsoring organizations seeking project renewal are required to complete this section.

- Briefly state your project's objectives and provide a clear description of the project's impact/outcomes, and accomplishments/outputs to date.

C. Needs and Activities

1. State in measurable and quantifiable terms the specific poverty-related need(s) identified by the community(ies) that the AmeriCorps*VISTA project will address, including the number of low-income people directly affected by the problem(s).

Helpful Hint:

Use current and local statistical data, citing the source wherever possible, to substantiate the problem.

Example:

An applicant proposing to develop a child care program for families transitioning from welfare to work would explain the scope of the child care shortage in their county including statistical references to the number of families transitioning from welfare to work, the average cost of child care in the county, and other data to illustrate the need to

be addressed. The applicant also would describe the cause of the child care shortage, how long it has persisted, and the long-term effects it may have on the county.

2. Indicate the number of AmeriCorps*VISTA members and AmeriCorps*VISTA Leaders requested.

D. Strengthening Communities

1. Describe how the new infrastructure or organizational capacity created by your project will bring individuals and, ultimately, the community out of poverty.
2. How will you involve the community to ensure the sustainability of the proposed project?
3. How, if at all, will you collaborate with other national service programs in order to support the proposed project?

Helpful Hint:

One of the primary purposes of AmeriCorps*VISTA is to ensure sustainable solutions to problems facing low-income communities. Address how you will ensure the proposed project and outcomes continue upon completion of the project plan and withdrawal of AmeriCorps*VISTA support.

Example:

The neighborhood credit union organized by the AmeriCorps*VISTA members annually will assist between 500-800 individuals transitioning from welfare to work by helping them develop the financial assets needed to weather personal economic crises and permanently remain self-sufficient. The AmeriCorps*VISTA members will recruit a corps of at least 20 community volunteers with personal finance experience (including finance students from the local university) to staff the credit union. Additionally, the members will secure the start-up funds to hire a full-time coordinator and develop a coalition of community stakeholders to foster the credit union's sustainability.

E. Recruitment and Development (of Members, Volunteers and Participants)

1. Describe in specific terms how your organization will recruit qualified AmeriCorps*VISTA members to serve on this project. What challenges do you anticipate in recruiting qualified members?
2. Describe the service-related transportation needs of the AmeriCorps*VISTA members and your plans for meeting those needs.
3. Briefly describe plans for orienting members to your organization and the community. Describe any training opportunities and technical assistance that will be available to members throughout their service.

Helpful Hints:

Explain the strategies you will use to recruit AmeriCorps*VISTA members. Describe local media markets, what media outreach will be conducted, and other techniques you will use to recruit candidates. You may wish to describe the methods by which current employees were recruited or any other previous recruiting experience.

Address the member's service-related transportation needs including geographic area in which members will have to travel, the estimated cost, and how you will reimburse member(s) for their service-related transportation expenses.

Orientation should occur during the first month of an AmeriCorps*VISTA member's assignment. Training opportunities may occur throughout the course of a member's term of service.

Address how you will ensure a high-quality experience for members.

F. VISTA Assignment Description

1. List the tasks and activities AmeriCorps*VISTA member(s) and Leader(s) must perform to implement the strategies described in the project plan(s). These tasks and activities should logically relate to the overall project goals and activities you propose in Part III, Project plan for AmeriCorps*VISTA Project Applicants. This section will include more detail on the actual service activities, and should not include direct service activities. Create as many different assignment descriptions as needed for the project.
2. List the recommended skills and qualifications that an AmeriCorps*VISTA member or Leader should have to successfully complete the project plan.

Helpful Hints:

When completing this section, keep in mind that AmeriCorps*VISTA members fulfill a one-year, full-time term of service. Members may serve up to three terms of service, at the discretion of the Corporation.

The AmeriCorps*VISTA assignment description is used to recruit and inform potential members about specific assignments. Members assigned to the project will use the assignment description as their principal guidance for day-to-day activities designed to achieve the outcomes of the project project plan.

Will all positions involve the same activities and tasks? Will the activities and tasks change during each year of the multi-year project?

In determining what skills are recommended, you may want to address whether members will be required to have proficient knowledge of English, Spanish, or any other language.

Sample Assignment Description:

The Member tasks and activities for Year 1 will include:

1. Producing outreach materials for volunteer recruitment;
2. Recruiting and screening volunteers;

3. Meeting with local business owners to solicit assistance in designing job-readiness training sites;
4. Setting up teachers' referral system to select youth candidates for the program; and,
5. Researching and developing funding resources to ensure project sustainability.

Recommended skills and qualifications include:

1. An interest in working on the problem of employment for low-income youth;
2. Excellent writing skills;
3. Experience coordinating a project or group of volunteers;
4. An educator, counselor, or individual who has experience with youth programs is desirable; and,
5. Proficiency in Spanish and/or experience in English as a Second Language tutoring.

G. Project Management

1. Describe plans for daily supervision of AmeriCorps*VISTA members. Specify if supervision will be a full-time or part-time responsibility.
2. Are 51 percent or more of the persons on your board of directors' members of the low-income community? If not, please describe how your agency has developed, or will develop, an advisory council for the AmeriCorps*VISTA project that consists of members or representatives of the low-income community served by the proposed project.
3. If individual sites other than your organization will host/supervise members, please list the names of those organizations and describe the structure of their relationship to your organization. Also, list the names and titles of the site supervisors.
4. Describe your plans for evaluating progress towards achieving your project's anticipated outcomes and accomplishments. What information and data will you use to demonstrate the concrete impacts of the project?

Helpful Hints:

Address the involvement of low-income individuals in the development and implementation of the proposed project.

H. Organizational Capacity

1. Is your organization able to contribute financially for all or some of costs related to AmeriCorps*VISTA members? Please explain.
2. What in-kind resources will you provide to ensure the success of the proposed project?
3. Describe current activities your organization and other organizations are undertaking to address the problems identified in your need statement. Describe how the proposed project will complement this work.

4. Describe the accessibility of services provided to members of the community with disabilities. Is your organization able to accommodate AmeriCorps*VISTA members with disabilities?

Helpful Hints:

In-kind resources include computers, phones, Internet access, and office space. Include any additional support, such as free or low-cost housing.

You may want to highlight your organization's track record in managing projects similar to the proposed project.

Federal law requires that AmeriCorps*VISTA sponsoring organizations make reasonable accommodations to meet the needs of qualified persons with disabilities wishing to serve as members. Indicate any factors the Corporation should be aware of when assigning members with disabilities to this project, such as availability of transportation and housing, accessibility of facilities, etc.

I. Other

1. Please leave blank unless otherwise instructed.

PART III. PROJECT PLAN

Overview

The purpose of this project plan is for you to describe the goals and results you expect to achieve through the proposed project, and the performance measures you will use to assess your progress in achieving them. Complete the project plan template provided, being sure to address each need identified in Part II, section C. Make copies as needed.

While the goals should cover a multi-year period-the estimated length of time required to complete the proposed project - the activities and performance measures should only cover one year. In the project plan, clearly demonstrate:

- A realistic effort to help bring individuals and families out of poverty permanently; not simply to make poverty more tolerable;
- Responsibilities and duties of AmeriCorps*VISTA members that are geared towards building a permanent infrastructure within the applicant organization; and
- Proposed project results that are measurable and convey the actual impact the project has on the individuals, families, and communities being served.

The project plan should state in measurable and quantifiable terms:

- The goals the project will achieve each year;
- The activities;
- The results (or outputs and outcomes) leading to the achievement of the goals; and
- The dates by which you expect to achieve your goals, activities, and results.

Performance Measures

Within your project plan, you are required to identify 3-5 results that you plan to label as performance measures. Under this requirement, you are to submit at least *one* performance measure for each of the following types of results: ***Output, Intermediate Outcomes, and End Outcomes***.

1. **Outputs** specify a count, such as the amount of service members or volunteers have completed, but do not provide information on benefits or other changes in the lives of members or beneficiaries. The number of volunteers recruited, people served, workshops conducted, persons trained, and clinics established are all examples of outputs.
2. **Intermediate Outcomes** are changes or benefits experienced by project beneficiaries or the AmeriCorps*VISTA sponsoring organization, but are short of a significant benefit for them. Often referred to as “milestones”, intermediate outcomes do not represent the final result you hope to achieve for the individuals, families, and communities served. In a program designed to reduce high school drop-out rates, for example, intermediate outcomes could include measures of improved school attendance and improved attitudes toward school.
3. **End Outcomes** are the positive changes that your project or sponsoring organization ultimately hopes to achieve for project beneficiaries. End outcomes address community conditions or needed changes in the condition, behavior, or attitudes of beneficiaries. An increase in summer employment rates among high school students participating in the program is an end outcome for a job training and readiness project for students.

For each performance measure, you will be required to identify the **results** you expect to achieve, the **data instruments** (or collection methods) you will use to measure the results, and the **targets** you expect to meet. A target is a specific, quantifiable level of change that you want to attain. Performance measures with targets include statements such as, “at the end of the school year, 90 (90%) of 100 students tutored will advance one reading grade level,” or “of 30 high-risk teenagers mentored by volunteers over a three-year period, 25 will have had no contact with the juvenile justice system.”

Instructions

Column A

1. In the first row of column A, list the proposed project goal that you expect AmeriCorps*VISTA members to achieve in relation to the problem(s) identified in your project narrative (Part II, section C).
2. In the second section of column A, list the activities or action steps that are required to accomplish the intended goals. In the Project Narrative, Section F. VISTA Assignment Description, you will include more specific tasks and activities for each member position you develop based upon these overall goals and activities.
3. In the third section of column A, identify the results, leading to the achievement of the proposed goal. For the goals that will be measured for performance, make sure that the 3-5

results for which you will measure performance are labeled in parentheses as “performance measures.” For each performance measure, identify the indicators, targets, and instrument(s) you will use to measure this result, and how you will collect the data. Report any data you have for this measure from prior years.

For each goal in column A, identify the related activities and results as described above.

Column B

In column B, indicate the periods of time during which the member will work on and achieve the stated results. Performance measures for each type of result, outputs, intermediate outcomes, and end outcomes should be measured at least annually. Make sure that the quarters reflect this.

Periods of time used for results are the federal fiscal quarters which are:

- Quarter 1: October – December
- Quarter 2: January – March
- Quarter 3: April – June
- Quarter 4: July – August

Column C

In column C, AmeriCorps*VISTA projects report the progress on their performance measures results for outputs, intermediate outcomes and end outcomes. Leave this blank until time for reporting.

Column A AmeriCorps*VISTA Project Plan	Column B Date(s)	Column C Date(s)
<p>Identify Goal to which members' activities are directed for the full length of the project.</p> <p>Goal 1: According to the Workforce Center's Annual Survey, currently only ten percent of unemployed clients in the region gain employment with the assistance of the Center. To help more clients secure jobs, AmeriCorps*VISTA members will implement a job training and readiness program to serve clients from the region. Two hundred clients will receive training in year one; three hundred clients in year two; and five hundred clients in year three.</p>	<p>3 Years</p>	
<p>Activities: What are the action steps needed to accomplish this goal?</p> <p>Six AmeriCorps*VISTA members will participate in the following activities to develop the job training and readiness program.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Design and test the job readiness curriculum. 2. Recruit and train twenty community volunteers to serve as instructors. 3. Conduct a public awareness campaign about the job-readiness program, targeting areas where clients congregate. 4. Recruit clients to participate in one of twenty six-week job readiness programs. Four hundred clients will be recruited for the program each year. 5. Coordinate volunteers to instruct the programs, develop partnerships with ten local service providers, and conduct a public awareness campaign to recruit participants. 		
<p>Identify any Results (outputs, intermediate outcomes, or end outcomes) related to this goal. If the result is to be measured, write "performance measure" in parentheses beside the result. For each result, identify the indicator, the targets you expect to meet, the instrument(s) you will use to measure this objective, and how you will collect the data. If you have data for this objective from prior years, report it here.</p> <p>Output: 75 community members will be recruited and trained to serve as volunteer instructors.</p> <p>Output: 20 community members will be recruited to participate in a public awareness campaign about the job training and readiness program.</p> <p>Intermediate Outcome: Increased public awareness about the job training and readiness program.</p>	<p>Q1 – Q4</p> <p>Q1 – Q2</p>	

*Sample AmeriCorps*VISTA Project plan*

<i>Sample AmeriCorps*VISTA Project plan</i> Column A AmeriCorps*VISTA Project Plan	Column B Date(s)	Column C Date(s)
Identify Goal to which members' activities are directed for the full length of the project.		
Activities: What are the action steps needed to accomplish this goal?		
Identify any Results (outputs, intermediate outcomes, or end outcomes) related to this goal. If the result is to be measured, write " performance measure " in parentheses beside the result. For each result, identify the indicator , the targets you expect to meet, the instrument(s) you will use to measure this objective, and how you will collect the data. If you have data for this objective from prior years, report it here.		

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Make as many copies of the Project Plan as necessary.

PART IV. ATTACHMENTS

Please submit the following attachments with your project narrative to the appropriate program office within the Corporation for National and Community Service.

- List of Advisory Council Members if already selected. If not, the list must be submitted to the Corporation before the end of the first quarter of the project. (Year 1 + renewal applications)
- Copy of Articles of Incorporation (not applicable to public entities). (Year 1 only unless changed)
- List of Board of Directors, or governing body (not applicable if public entity). (Year 1 only unless changed)
- Organizational chart of the applicant (Year 1 only unless changed)
- Tax exempt status: either IRS determination or copy of application to IRS for exemption (not applicable to public entities)
- Copy of Supervisor's Resume and Job Description (Year 1 only unless changed)
- Two letters of support for the proposed project from other organizations in your community. If the organization is a project partner, the letter should describe the type of support and/or resources the partner organization will contribute. (Year 1 + renewal applications)
- For multi-site projects, list of organizations where AC*VISTA members will be placed, and contact persons, along with a letter of commitment from the Board of Directors of each organization
- Copy of most recent financial audit if available. (Year 1)
- Signed Assurances and Certifications forms (Attached to the SF424 Face Sheet.)

PART V. BUDGET FORM AND NARRATIVE

Please complete the budget form and narrative following the instructions provided separately by your Corporation State Office representative.