2004 AMERICORPS*VISTA PROGRAM GUIDANCE
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I.   INTRODUCTION

In 2004, AmeriCorps*VISTA will celebrate its forty-year legacy of capacity building and empowerment of faith-based and other community-based organizations aimed at alleviating poverty. The VISTA mission within the national service movement was first conceived by President John F. Kennedy and his brother Robert Kennedy as a domestic Peace Corps. Under the current administration of President George W. Bush, VISTA has been significantly enhanced through increased funding and a unique national service call to a new generation of Americans through USA Freedom Corps.

Today, thousands of new VISTA members are responding to President Bush's call to foster a culture of service and responsibility. They are recent college graduates, Americans searching for a new career path in the service arena, and retirees looking to give back to their country. They are serving in urban neighborhoods, small towns, and tribal communities across the country. They are starting literacy initiatives, coordinating mentoring programs for children of incarcerated parents, raising funds to support local health clinics and low-income asset development efforts, recruiting volunteers for community food banks, and building a bridge across the digital divide.

Locally-inspired initiatives such as these will continue to have our strongest support as our members and sponsoring organizations map the inherent strengths and solutions of our nation's grassroots laboratories of civic invention. However, it is fitting in the 40th year of the VISTA program that we not only take stock of our gains, but that we renew our resolve to redouble our mission and achieve even greater strategic outcomes in addressing poverty and related family and community needs.

The following guidance sets forth AmeriCorps*VISTA's strategic priorities for fiscal year 2004 and new requirements with regard to performance measurement, accountability, and our grant-making process. This guidance applies to all AmeriCorps*VISTA project applicants as well as current projects.

AmeriCorps*VISTA is committed to ending poverty one individual, one family, one community at a time. I am confident that the acts of service and compassion demonstrated by VISTA projects and members will continue to offer promising models for family and community-based solutions in neighborhoods throughout our nation.

On behalf of our volunteers and many supporters, I would like to thank you for the critical role you have played in helping to bring the vision of VISTA into reality through substantial service projects.

                              Howard Turner
                              Acting Director of VISTA

II. OVERVIEW

"There are pockets of despair in America. In spite of our plenty, in spite of the fact that we've got great wealth compared to many societies, there are people who hurt, people who wonder about their future … people who need help … and there is no question in my mind … that because of the great strength of our country, the compassion of our people, we can help those people realize a better tomorrow."
-- President George W. Bush, January 30, 2003 in an address to the Boys and Girls Club of Washington

AmeriCorps*VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) provides full-time volunteers to faith-based and other community-based organizations and public agencies to create and expand programs that bring low-income individuals and communities out of poverty. Each year, more than 6,000 VISTA members leverage human, financial, and material resources to increase the capacity of thousands of low-income communities across the country to solve their own problems.

AmeriCorps*VISTA embraces the following guidelines:

- **Anti-Poverty Focus --** Any private nonprofit organization or public agency with a program idea that is poverty-related in scope can apply for an AmeriCorps*VISTA project. The project's goal should address helping individuals and communities out of poverty rather than focusing on making poverty more tolerable.
- **Community Empowerment --** Organizations must ensure that each project engages residents of the low-income community in planning, developing, and implementing the project to ensure that it is responsive and relevant to low-income residents' ownership and self-help initiatives tapping inherent community strengths.
- **Capacity-Building --** VISTA achieves its mission by assigning members to organizations in order to expand the ability of those organizations to fight poverty. Through activities such as fundraising, volunteer recruitment and management, outreach, and collaborative development, VISTA members mobilize community resources and increase the capacity of organizations to better address the needs of the communities in which they serve.
- **Sustainable Solutions --** VISTA members are people power to help organizations address a new program area related to their mission. However, it is crucial to the concept of local self-reliance that organizations plan for the eventual phase out of VISTA members and the absorption of their functions by other facets of the organization or community.

For a copy of the AmeriCorps*VISTA Project Application along with instructions for applying to become a VISTA sponsoring organization, visit www.americorps.org/vista/sponsorinfo.html.

III.   KEY PROGRAM ELEMENTS FOR 2004

A.   ANTI-POVERTY PROGRAMMING PRIORITIES

In fiscal 2004, AmeriCorps*VISTA will continue to ensure a strong return on investment and attempt to maximize the impact of its sponsoring organizations' efforts to reduce poverty. To improve effectiveness and accountability, VISTA will develop clear performance goals and continually promote best practices and innovation among its sponsoring organizations.

To measure its success and ensure it is programming for long-term, anti-poverty outcomes, AmeriCorps*VISTA will focus its efforts within the following four areas: Empowering Faith-Based and Other Community-Based Organizations, Asset Development, Strengthening Families to Increase Child Well-being Outcomes, and Homeland Security.

Within this framework, VISTA recognizes that all successful projects are community-driven. Continued flexibility and innovation at the local level will continue to be encouraged.

1.   Empowering Faith-Based and other Community-Based Organizations
Small faith-based and other community-based organizations often design some of the most innovative and effective ways to reduce youth violence, nurture the spirit of entrepreneurship, combat drug addiction, and increase self-sufficiency among the poor. These groups, however, frequently are challenged due to lack of administrative support, few staff members, and scarce financial resources.

AmeriCorps*VISTA has a long history of working with faith-based and other community-based organizations that serve poor communities around the country:
- According to the 1999 accomplishments study by Aguirre International, 51 percent of the 883 organizations VISTA supported in 1999 had nine or fewer staff members. An estimated 26 percent of the organizations had fewer than four staff members.
- According to the same study, 54 percent of VISTA's sponsoring organizations in 1999 had annual budgets of less than $500,000, and 37 percent had budgets of less than $250,000.
- Today, more than 14 percent of VISTA members serve directly with faith-based projects or are assigned to projects that support the work of faith-based organizations.

In fiscal 2004, AmeriCorps*VISTA will continue to identify and conduct outreach to faith-based and other community-based organizations that have never received federal resources. VISTA's structure ensures that its resources are accessible to these organizations with few barriers.

2.   Asset Development
According to the Federal Reserve Board, an estimated 10 million U.S. households have
no savings or checking accounts. This population tends to include low income families
that often face multiple barriers to developing assets and becoming financially secure.
Programs that focus on asset development can help a low-income individual save money
and build equity in physical assets, such as a home. Acquiring equity and generating
savings are critical to helping move people permanently toward self-sufficiency.

Entrepreneur Corps. AmeriCorps*VISTA has been a leader in initiating asset
development and wealth creation programs such as Individual Development Accounts
(IDA), home ownership, and automobile acquisition programs. More recently, VISTA
has dedicated members to entrepreneur education and micro-enterprise initiatives, which
help low-income people become self-sufficient by developing their own businesses. In
2002, VISTA launched the Entrepreneur Corps to expand its efforts in this arena by
allocating an estimated 400 members to assist organizations in creating asset
development programs for families and individuals while also developing the capacity of
the organizations they are placed with through sound technology planning and financial
management and development. In fiscal 2004, VISTA will further develop the
Entrepreneur Corps and continue to dedicate substantial resources toward this
programming area.

Overcoming Barriers to Long-Term Employment. AmeriCorps*VISTA will continue to
support programming that helps provide access to safe and affordable child care, job
search and placement services, job training, reliable transportation, medical care, and
emergency services.

Bridging the Digital Divide. AmeriCorps*VISTA also will continue to support an
extensive network of sponsoring organizations that are tackling the problems of the
digital divide. VISTA members will continue to play a significant role in helping
community organizations to assess their technology needs; develop and design
technology plans; set up school-based or neighborhood-based computer learning centers;
secure resources for hardware and software; and recruit community volunteers for a
variety of activities including hardware installation, instruction and mentoring, and
staffing computer labs.

3.   Family Strengthening to Increase Child Well-Being Outcomes
As AmeriCorps*VISTA works to move more low-income individuals and communities
toward long-term financial independence and self-sufficiency, it also will work to protect
children–often the most vulnerable victims of poverty–by strengthening their families.

When developing Temporary Assistance for Needy Families legislation in 1996,
Congress recognized that two-parent families represent the ideal environment for raising
children. VISTA will work to ensure that children and their families, regardless of their
socioeconomic background, have an opportunity to achieve their fullest potential.

A mounting body of research data attests to the imperative of this investment, which President Bush has prioritized in the reauthorization of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families anti-poverty program. According to the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1979-97), children raised without the benefit of an intact two-parent family are four to seven times more likely to experience poverty than children raised in the context of intact married families.[1] Focusing on breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty offers the greatest long-term return on investment, as it is easier to prevent poverty within the context of the family than to attempt to break the cycle in later years.

Empowering Local Grassroots Initiatives for Family Formation and Development. During the past decade, it has become widely accepted that youth delinquency, poverty, poor academic performance, and child abuse are rooted in a number of interrelated social problems stemming from the breakdown of the family structure. The Adolescent Health Study of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services noted the interconnected behaviors of teen violence, drug and alcohol abuse, pre-mature sexual activity, tobacco, and suicide and their linkage to a lack of parent-child connectedness.[2] In fiscal 2004, VISTA will work to assist community-based efforts throughout the country in concert with state demonstrations and local initiatives to provide families in low-income communities with access to resources and best practices in areas such as responsible fatherhood, marriage skills training and mentoring programs, child care, and strengthened parental roles.

Innovations Addressing At-Risk Youth Behaviors. On December 20, 2002, President Bush established the White House Task Force for Disadvantaged Youth to improve the effectiveness of federal youth programs in general and programs for disadvantaged youth in particular. His Executive Order noted the "unacceptably large number of American youth (who) fail each year to develop the academic, social, and citizenship skills necessary to succeed in our country" and directed the formation of an inter-agency task force that includes the Corporation for National and Community Service. VISTA will do its part in incorporating positive youth development practices that help disadvantaged youths in areas such as addressing gang violence, providing services to children of incarcerated low-income parents, and promoting youth abstinence and character development in tandem with community service initiatives that foster youth leadership such as the President's Student Service Awards.

After School Programs and Child Care. A large majority of the individuals remaining or cycling back onto public assistance are women with children–making affordable childcare more critical than ever. Because research has shown the powerful impact the first few years of development have on a child's ability to achieve in later years, VISTA

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[1] Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor. 2002. *National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 cohort, 1979-2000*. Center for Human Resource Research, The Ohio State University. Columbus, OH.

[2] National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD). 1997. *The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health*. Carolina Population Center, University of North Carolina. Chapel Hill, NC.

will continue to afford resources to projects that create or expand after-school programs and quality child care centers. These initiatives will include developing a strong professional workforce (including those transitioning out of welfare), expanding the capacity of current childcare systems (including home-based and proprietary care), and deepening the quality of programming with enhanced parental roles in strong child development.

Childhood Literacy. President Bush has made reading a national priority and VISTA will continue to maintain a focus on literacy in support of the No Child Left Behind Act. Current AmeriCorps*VISTA sponsoring organizations undertaking literacy efforts should continue to look to a new set of sites for VISTA members (or participate with substantial cost sharing), and we will look to bring literacy efforts to new locations. Faith-based and other community-based organizations also will be encouraged to explore funding and program opportunities through state supplemental education resources pursuant to the No Child Left Behind Act. All new literacy projects will be developed on a three-year timeline with a sustainable program as the result.

Older Americans in Poverty. Poverty and isolation among seniors, while frequently overlooked, is one of the most tragic manifestations of poverty in America today and continues to be a focus of attention for AmeriCorps*VISTA. With an eye toward helping the elderly escape poverty, VISTA will continue to support projects that provide prescription drug education, transportation, home health care alternatives, employment opportunities, and housing modifications to help people overcome shut-in situations. VISTA also will emphasize youth service and intergenerational programming as strategies for assisting the low-income elderly. VISTA will strengthen its collaborations with Senior Corps programs in furtherance of these initiatives.

4.   Homeland Security

On November 8, 2001, President Bush announced that the Corporation for National and Community Service would support homeland security in three major areas: public safety, public health, and disaster mitigation and preparedness.

Low-income communities and citizens are frequently under-resourced in critical areas of public health and public safety. In addition to traditional problems regarding access to preventive health care and exposure to higher incidences of crime, many residents of low-income communities are situated near power plants and chemical plants, thus making them susceptible to bio-terrorism.

Across the country, programs have begun to explore the extraordinary potential that AmeriCorps*VISTA members represent in building the capacity of local Citizen Corps, Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD), Community Emergency Response Teams, and Neighborhood Watch groups by developing infrastructure to leverage part-time volunteers. In fiscal 2004, the development of homeland security projects will continue to be a priority.

B. STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY CAPACITY

1. Leveraging Volunteers and Dollars

For decades, AmeriCorps*VISTA has developed systems and structures within nonprofit organizations to effectively engage community volunteers in long-term, meaningful service. VISTA members help train volunteers, develop volunteer management systems, and foster greater volunteer involvement within the projects and organizations they serve. VISTA members are also instrumental in identifying and pursuing funding sources for community initiatives through grant writing, in-kind solicitations, and other innovative fundraising endeavors.

According to the last comprehensive study of the program, VISTA members recruited more than 283,000 community volunteers who donated 6.6 million volunteer hours to project activities annually (*1999 AmeriCorps*VISTA Accomplishments*; 2000, Aguirre International).

Currently, all VISTA sponsoring organizations are required to include information regarding the number of volunteers and donations generated by VISTA in the project progress reports submitted to their Corporation State Office. In FY 2004, VISTA will work with the network of State Offices to implement systems to measure the aggregate funding and volunteer hours generated by VISTA members.

2. Special Initiatives

Summer Associates. In an effort to create more opportunities for individuals to serve their community and country and encourage a movement of civic engagement among today's youth, VISTA will recruit Summer Associates to spend a summer serving with VISTA. While VISTA will continue to encourage existing sponsoring organizations to develop Summer Associate projects, it also will allocate a portion of Summer Associate resources to new, discrete initiatives capable of achieving high-level impacts within a 10-week period.

Rural Initiative. Many of the social and economic gaps presented to the nation in 1964 remain a real and ongoing challenge to the people in rural communities across America such as Appalachia, the Deep South, and the Colonias. Indoor plumbing and access to clean water is a pressing and solvable problem facing many of the poorest counties in the nation. VISTA is committed to dedicating resources to help generate and leverage the critical human, financial, infrastructure and other community self-help and voluntarism resources to resolve substandard conditions in impoverished parts of rural America.

Tribal Initiative. VISTA will continue to reach out to tribal projects that seek to expand their capacity to fight poverty and enhance service opportunities in Indian Country by assisting existing and potential sponsors in increasing their effectiveness and access to resources. In fiscal 2004, VISTA will continue to provide support for new and potential tribal sponsors to participate in training events, assist in designing and convening the annual *Conference on Service in Native American Communities*, and

assist in enhancing the awareness of Corporation State Office and Headquarters staff regarding the programming and implementation needs of Tribal sponsoring organizations.

Martin Luther King Day Projects. AmeriCorps*VISTA will continue to encourage sponsoring organizations to organize service events and celebrations of Martin Luther King Day. In 2004, in collaboration with the Corporation's Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, the Points of Light Foundation, National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice, and other organizations, VISTA will promote a *National Faith Service Challenge* to every faith community to get involved in one of the national service days to engage youth in a lifetime of service.

President's Volunteer Service Award. The President's Volunteer Service Award was created to recognize the millions of Americans who make a sustained commitment to volunteer service and civic participation over the course of a 12-month period. VISTA will work to promote the award among its sponsoring organizations and the communities in which they serve. The President's Volunteer Service Award is given to youth ages from five to 14 who have completed 50 or more hours of volunteer service within a 12-month period; individuals 15 or older who have completed 100 or more hours of volunteer service within a 12-month period; or families or groups who have completed 200 or more hours of volunteer service, including at least 25 hours by each individual, within a 12-month period. Award winners will receive a certificate of achievement, a signed letter of congratulations from the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation, a note from the President of the United States, and an official President's Award pin. To learn more about the award, visit www.presidentialserviceawards.gov.

3. Regional Initiative Conferences

In fiscal 2004, AmeriCorps*VISTA will commemorate its 40th anniversary by hosting a series of regional initiative conferences focused on leveraging community resources and grassroots initiatives to address some of the most pressing issues facing their communities including the needs of low-income families and children of incarcerated parents. The series, *Strengthening America's Children and Families* will be convened in partnership with Senior Corps, the Administration for Children and Families, and local host organizations. The goal of the conferences will be to create a synergy within states and regions to significantly advance the anti-poverty programming priorities outlined previously. The five conferences will be convened, one in each cluster, in the following cities: Jackson, MS; Oakland, CA; Columbus, OH; Dallas, TX; and New York, NY.

C. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

VISTA reinforces its members' commitment to being socially responsible, engaged citizens. By orienting members prior to beginning service, training members in requisite skills to increase program impact, and assisting project supervisors in project planning and developing on-site orientation and training, VISTA emphasizes experiential learning and the professional development and personal growth of its members.

1.   Training
Pre-Service Orientation. Pre-Service Orientation (PSO) is a basic orientation to AmeriCorps*VISTA and the Corporation for National and Community Service for all those who are accepted for service. Generally, it is the first step in a year-long learning process. PSO provides AmeriCorps*VISTA members with foundational program development skills, an esprit de corps with other members, and identity with the VISTA mission of helping communities help themselves. Each PSO is led by a staff person of the Corporation for National Service (CNCS) and a group of professional trainers.

Early Service Training. As of the January-February training window, nationally sponsored Early Service Training is discontinued. Clusters are encouraged to utilize existing training resources to provide training as they see fit.

Supervisors Training. All new Project Supervisors must attend training before the training window in which they would like their members' PSO training to take place. The purpose of Supervisors Training is to provide supervisors with an understanding of the Corporation for National and Community Service and AmeriCorps*VISTA as they relate to national and community service; an overview of key strategies involved in designing and managing clear, realistic, outcome-based member assignments within multi-year projects; tools to draft effective on-site orientation and training plans; knowledge of the recruitment resources available to them and effective screening and selection strategies; and an understanding of their role in program monitoring, evaluation, and reporting. Upon returning to their projects, Project Supervisors are responsible for orienting site supervisors and other individuals associated with oversight of the AmeriCorps*VISTA project.

Training Windows. The majority of AmeriCorps*VISTA trainings are held within regional clusters. However, members and supervisors associated with national projects attend national events held in Washington, D.C. or other designated areas. The updated detailed training calendar was distributed by Danielle Neveaux, dneveaux@cns.gov or (202) 606-5000, x126 in March 2004.

2.   Leadership Development
Leaders. AmeriCorps*VISTA Leaders support and help coordinate larger VISTA projects and/or regions, involving at least eight VISTA members, in their efforts to address the needs of low-income communities. They are individuals who already have successfully completed a term of national service and demonstrated leadership qualities in doing so. Leaders play a supporting role in recruiting, mentoring, and coordinating AmeriCorps*VISTA members. For more information regarding the VISTA Leaders program, visit www.americorps.org/vista/leaderinfo.html.

All AmeriCorps*VISTA Leaders are required to attend one Leaders Training early in their service.   Leaders should attend Leaders Training within the first two months of their terms of service, with limited exceptions. Leaders Training is a weeklong intensive leadership experience that provides Leaders with an introduction to their new roles and equips them with a set of skills to help support members and ensure that their projects are sustainable.

Civic Engagement. One of VISTA's goals is to provide training opportunities and use the service experience to help members acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to be active citizens of communities--local, state, and national. In fiscal 2004, VISTA will continue to work with other CNCS programs to develop civics training and technical assistance for members that will focus on the responsibilities of democratic citizenship and community service.

3.   Member Benefits

Living Allowance. AmeriCorps*VISTA members receive a subsistence allowance determined by the Corporation. The subsistence allowance is approximately $9,500 but will vary based on the local cost of living within the area in which members are serving. AmeriCorps*VISTA Leaders receive an additional $200.00 per month subsistence allowance. For more information regarding the living allowance, see the AmeriCorps*VISTA Member Handbook located at http://www.americorps.org/members/resource/manuals.html.

Education Award. In order to ensure that enough resources are available in the National Service Trust before committing education awards, the Corporation for National and Community Service has issued new member enrollment procedures for AmeriCorps*VISTA. These procedures now require all sponsoring organizations to collect post-service benefit election information along with the completed member application from AmeriCorps*VISTA applicants 30 days prior to each training date. The form is available through state offices, and should be returned to the state office through the project supervisors upon completion.

Every AmeriCorps*VISTA applicant may elect one of two post-service benefits. This choice includes an education award of $4,725 or a cash stipend of $1,200. The completion of the AmeriCorps*VISTA Member Benefits Election form prior to training and enrollment is the only opportunity for applicants to elect and to receive an education award.

Health Care. The health care contract issued for fiscal 2004 has a term length of one year, with the option of renewing for future years. This presents a unique opportunity to review the current health care plan, to determine what is working and what challenges are faced on a daily basis in the work of VISTA members, and to examine potential innovations and improvements within the funding available. A working group of headquarters and field staff is reviewing the health care plan and researching options for the future. Those interested in submitting comments and suggestions for improvement and innovation should e-mail vistahealthcare@cns.gov.

IV.   PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

A.   *PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT REQUIREMENTS FOR PROJECTS*

Beginning in fiscal 2004, AmeriCorps*VISTA will implement new performance measurement requirements for all new and renewing projects. Within their AmeriCorps*VISTA Project Application Work Plan, applicants must identify a central goal from which to measure 3-5 proposed results (at least one output, one intermediate outcome, and one end outcome). The performance measurement expectations were designed in order to empower organizations to determine their own priorities and to measure their achievement; increase the capacity of community-based organizations to better analyze the impact of their work and use that analysis for program improvement purposes; generate new and better information to inform the policies, training, and technical assistance provided by AmeriCorps*VISTA; and demonstrate the value and impact of community-based projects and national service to a broad range of stakeholders.

A copy of the Performance Measurement Toolkit for AmeriCorps*VISTA Project Applicants is available through Corporation State Offices or online by visiting www.projectstar.org. Training and technical assistance will be provided through VISTA Supervisors Training. Project STAR, a training and technical assistance provider, is also available to provide technical assistance to projects and facilitate cluster-based performance measurement trainings. State Offices will be announcing training availability in 2004.

B.   AMERICORPS*VISTA AND GPRA

In compliance with Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), the Corporation's programs report publicly on their progress toward achieving their goals in an effort to improved government effectiveness and public accountability. For fiscal 2004, VISTA has identified the following indicators to demonstrate its performance to the general public:
- Number of VISTA members enrolled annually;
- Average percent of expected service time completed by VISTA members;
- The number of VISTA members serving in organizations expanding asset accumulation and entrepreneurial opportunities for the poor;
- The number of VISTA members serving in organizations focusing on children and youth;
- The number of VISTA members serving in faith-based organizations;
- The number of VISTA members serving in small community organizations;
- The number of VISTA members serving in organizations focusing on family strengthening;
- Percentage of VISTA members receiving education awards that use the award to further their education or reduce their education loan debt during the seven-year award period;
- Percentage of sponsoring organizations increasing their organizational capacity because of VISTA;
- Number of community volunteers resulting from VISTA activities;

- Total value of funds raised by VISTA members to strengthen the capacity of non-profit and voluntary organizations;
- Percentage of VISTA members indicating that their service experience influenced their career, educational or professional goals;
- The percentage of VISTA service recipients reporting that they received high quality services; and
- Percentage of sponsoring organizations reporting that VISTA members achieved their anti-poverty objectives.

AmeriCorps*VISTA will work to ensure it captures the information necessary to report against these performance measures.

C.   MONITORING PROJECTS

In 2002 and 2003, AmeriCorps*VISTA worked with several state offices to pilot new VISTA monitoring protocols and supporting documents. In mid-fiscal 2003, the monitoring protocols and supporting documents were issued for use nationwide. In fiscal 2004, state offices will continue to utilize these new protocols in order to assess projects' progress towards meeting the specific goals stated in their application work plans, ensure project compliance with applicable program and fiscal requirements, and identify and address specific technical assistance needs. The following criteria will be used to prioritize selection of AmeriCorps*VISTA projects and grants to be visited in this fiscal year:
1. Sponsors that receive *operational grants* will be visited once a year.
2. All projects will be visited in their *first year of operation* (ideally, soon after the first VISTA members are placed).
3. Projects also will be visited in their *3rd year of operation*.

D.   AGING OF PROJECTS

In FY 04, VISTA will conduct a data collection designed to determine the age of all current VISTA projects to inform a full-scale review of current VISTA policy on project duration. The data will be collected in April, followed by a period of staff (both HQ and field) input in June. For further information, please see the April 2, 2004, memorandum entitled, "Obtaining Accurate Information on the "Age" of Current VISTA Projects."

E.   STUDIES AND EVALUATIONS

1.   Entrepreneur Corps and Faith-Based and Community Initiatives
AmeriCorps*VISTA will assess projects and develop case studies within its portfolios of Entrepreneur Corps and Faith-Based and other Community-Based initiatives. The studies will assess how and to what extent VISTA resources have increased the capacity of organizations to provide services specific to their intended goals and outcomes. In addition, studies will evaluate project processes and identify common performance indicators within each portfolio to help VISTA assess aggregate project impact within a given strategic priority.

2.   Volunteer Management Capacity Study
The Corporation has undertaken a research study that assesses the current volunteer management capacity of America's nonprofits and congregations including AmeriCorps*VISTA sponsoring organizations. With this study, the Corporation will assess the effectiveness of current volunteer management practices and how it can enhance organizations' volunteer management infrastructure and use of volunteers.

3.   40th Anniversary Study of VISTA Alumni
In conjunction with the 40th anniversary of VISTA's authorizing statute, the Corporation for National and Community Service is seeking a contractor to design and carry out a study assessing the long-term effects of participation in the federal VISTA program. The study will assess how and to what extent VISTA service affected participants' attitudes, decisions, goals, values, and habits of civic engagement.

E.   SF424 ADDENDUM AND DEFINITIONS OF FAITH-BASED AND OTHER COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

The Corporation seeks to identify faith-based and other community-based organizations as part of its effort to remove barriers to the involvement of such groups in its programs. Consequently, the Corporation requires a sufficiently precise definition so that the changing degree of participation by these specific groups can be accurately assessed.

In fiscal 2004, faith-based organizations (FBOs) will be defined as follows:
- A religious congregation (church, mosque, synagogue, temple, etc.);
- An organization, program, or project operated or sponsored by a religious congregation;
- A nonprofit organization that clearly shows by its mission statement, policies, and/or practices that it is a religiously motivated or religiously guided institution;
- An organization that, when asked, designates itself as a faith-based or religious organization**;** or
- A collaboration of organizations which is led by an organization from the previously described categories, or of which half or more of the members are from the previously described categories.

To define smaller community-based organizations, the Corporation has concluded that it is appropriate to set a reasonable upper limit in full-time employees and size of budget for organizations that it will be designated as "smaller community-based organizations (CBOs)." AmeriCorps*VISTA defines a small community-based organization as follows: an organization with 5 or fewer full-time employees (FTE) and an annual budget for the community-service program of $299,000 or less (a church sponsoring a program might have a larger budget, most of which is not devoted to the program).

During the application process, organizations will be requested (though not required) to complete the SF 424 addendum (Survey on Ensuring Equal Opportunity for Applicants)

that requests applicants to identify themselves as FBOs or smaller CBOs. Using the definitions discussed above, an organization would be counted as an FBO if it checks the box indicating that it is "a faith-based/religious organization."

The Corporation also recognizes the value of intermediary organizations to provide capacity-building and technical support to smaller community-based entities. Intermediaries can be national, regional, state, or local in scope and serve as the legal applicant for an AmeriCorps*VISTA project application, ensuring that the systems to manage federal resources are in place.

For more information regarding the Corporation's faith-based organizations and smaller community-based organizations, visit www.cns.gov/faces.

V.   APPLYING FOR AMERICORPS*VISTA PROJECTS

A.   *FOUR TYPES OF VISTA PROJECTS*

1.   Standard Projects
AmeriCorps*VISTA will continue to program most of its resources through the standard project application and award process administered through Corporation State Offices. Standard projects are those projects whereby VISTA awards a certain number of VISTA members to a sponsoring organization with no grant provided or, subject to available funds, a small line item grant to support transportation and supervision needs where deemed necessary. For Standard Projects, VISTA members are payrolled by the Corporation and receive other member benefits stipends directly from the Corporation for National and Community Service.

2.   Program Grant Projects
Program grants are those projects whereby AmeriCorps*VISTA provides a financial grant to the sponsoring organization. The grant includes funds to provide the living allowance and other member benefits, and the members are payrolled directly from the sponsoring organization. Grant projects are awarded through a competitive process. In fiscal 2004, VISTA will introduce a Notice of Funds Available (NOFA) for its competitive granting process during the second quarter. All NOFAs are published in the Federal Register, which is searchable online at http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html. The Corporation website, www.nationalservice.org, regularly features CNCS NOFAs.

3.   Cost-Share Projects
AmeriCorps*VISTA has limited federal funding each year to support the full-time work of its network of approximately 1,200 nonprofit sponsors and their corresponding 6,000 members. In order to increase the availability of VISTA resources, sponsoring organizations are encouraged to share a portion of the costs associated with supporting VISTA members.

As a cost-share project, an organization covers the living allowance of all or some of its members (approximately $9,500 per year per member). In exchange for this investment, VISTA provides each member with health benefits, post-service benefits, childcare assistance, and any travel or relocation costs for the member. In addition, VISTA helps recruit and train the members, and provides payroll services for members at no cost. Small grants to assist with supervision, transportation, and training may be available.

The sponsor's portion of support does not have to be paid in advance. There are several flexible options for reimbursing VISTA in the cost-share program. For more information on the cost-share partnership, please refer to the cost-share brochure available upon request or visit www.americorps.org/vista/costshare.html.

4.   National Demonstration Initiatives
AmeriCorps*VISTA will continue to conduct outreach to national organizations that use unique, innovative strategies to reduce poverty on a multi-state basis with a focused emphasis on our continued asset development and faith-based and other community-based initiatives. VISTA also will consider unsolicited proposals for new project sponsorship subject to funding availability, unique performance outcomes, and innovative implementation of VISTA's anti-poverty programming priorities on a multi-state basis. Based on the project design and geographic scope, a determination will be made as to whether a project will be most effectively managed nationally or by a lead state office.

B.   EGRANTS
AmeriCorps*VISTA is currently field testing eGrants, the Corporation's online grant application system. As testing proceeds, training and technical assistance options will be developed for both staff and current VISTA supervisors. Over the course of fiscal 2004 and 2005, VISTA will phase in use of eGrants among all existing sponsoring organizations and new project applicants.

C.   DUNS
The Office of Management and Budget has directed federal agencies to provide a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number to all organizations applying for federal grants or cooperative agreements on or after October 1, 2003. The DUNS will be required whether an applicant is submitting a paper application or using eGrants and whether an applicant is applying for a new award or renewal award. AmeriCorps*VISTA encourages all current projects and potential applicants to obtain a DUNS number. To request a DUNS number, visit www.dnb.com/us/duns_update/index.html or call 1-866-705-5711.

Appendix A.   State Offices Directory
Below is a director of Corporation State Offices. To learn more about applying for an AmeriCorps*VISTA project, please contact your State Office.

STATE	*ADDRESS*	PHONE & FAX NUMBERS	*STATE DIRECTOR*
Alabama	950 22nd St., N., Suite 428 Birmingham, AL 35203	P (205) 731-0027 F (205) 731-0031	Betty Platt
Alaska	Jackson Federal Building 915 Second Avenue, Suite 3190 Seattle, WA 98174-1103	P (206) 220-7736 F (206) 220-4415	Billie Caldwell
Arkansas	Federal Building, Room 2506, 700 West Capitol Street, Little Rock, AR 72201	P (501) 324-5234 F (501) 324-6949	Opal Sims
Arizona	522 North Central, Room 205A Phoenix, AZ 85004-2190	P (602) 379-4825 F (602) 379-4030	Lisa Guccione
California	11150 W. Olympic Blvd., Suite 670 Los Angeles, CA 90036	P (310) 235-7709 F (310) 235-7422	Kristen Haggins
Colorado	999 Eighteenth Street Suite 1440 South Denver, CO 80202	P (303) 312-7953 F (303) 312-7954	Bruce Cline
Connecticut	280 Trumbull Street Hartford, CT 06103-3510	P (860) 240-3237 F (860) 240-3238	Romero Cherry
Delaware	See Maryland address		Peter Heinaru

District of Columbia	1201 New York Ave., NW Suite 9215 Washington, DC 20525	P (202) 606-5000, x 485 F (202) 565-2789	Rosetta Freeman-Busby
Florida	3165 McCrory Street, Suite 115 Orlando, FL 32803-3750	P (407) 648-6117 F (407) 648-6116	Suzanne Richards
Georgia	75 Piedmont Avenue, N.E. Room 902 Atlanta, GA 30303-2587	P (404) 331-4646 F (404) 331-2898	Darryl James (also South cluster Area Mgr.)
Hawaii	300 Ala Moana Blvd. Honolulu, HI 96850-0001	P (808) 541-2832 F (808) 541-3603	Lynn Dunn
Iowa	Federal Building, Room 917 210 Walnut Street Des Moines, IA 50309-2195	P (515) 284-4816 F (515) 284-6640	Vicki Hover-Williamson
Idaho	304 North 8th Street, Room 344 Boise, ID 83702-5835	P (208) 334-1707 F (208) 334-1421	V. Kent Griffitts
Illinois	77 West Jackson Boulevard Suite 442 Chicago, IL 60604-3511	P (312) 353-3622 F (312) 353-6496	John Hosteny, acting
Indiana	46 East Ohio Street Room 457, Indianapolis, IN 46204-1922	P (317) 226-6724 F (317) 226-5437	Louis Lopez
Kansas	444 S.E. Quincy Room 260 Topeka, KS 66683-3572	P (785) 295-2540 F (785) 295-2596	William Dillon, based in Kansas City, MO office (as of 2/17/04)
Kentucky	600 Martin L. King Place Room 190 Louisville, KY 40202-2230	P (502) 582-6384 F (502) 582-6386	Betsy Wells

State	Address	Contact	Name
Louisiana	707 Florida Street, Suite 316 Baton Rouge, LA 70801	P (225) 389-0473 F (225) 389-0510	Willard Labrie
Maine	See New Hampshire address		Shireen Tilley
Massachusetts	10 Causeway Street Room 473 Boston, MA 02222-1038	P (225) 389-0473 F (225) 389-0510	Malcolm Coles (also Atlantic cluster Area Mgr.)
Maryland	Fallon Federal Building 31 Hopkins Plaza, Suite 400-B Baltimore, MD 21201	P (410) 962-4443 F (410) 962-3201	Peter Heinaru
Michigan	211 West Fort Street, Suite 1408 Detroit, MI 48226-2799	P (313) 226-7848 F (313) 226-2557	Mary Pfeiler
Minnesota	431 South 7th Street Room 2480 Minneapolis, MN 55415-1854	P (612) 334-4083 F (612) 334-4084	Robert Jackson
Missouri	801 Walnut Street Suite 504 Kansas City, MO 64106-2009	P (816) 374-6300 F (816) 374-6305	William Dillon
Mississippi	100 West Capitol Street Room 1005A Jackson, MS 39269-1092	P (601) 965-5664 F (601) 965-4671	R. Abdul-Azeez

Montana	208 North Montana Avenue Suite 206 Helena, MT 59601-3837	P (406) 449-5404 F (406) 449-5412	John Allen
Nebraska	100 Centennial Mall North Room 156 Lincoln, NE 68508-3896	P (402) 437-5493 F (402) 437-5495	Vicki Hover-Williamson (located in Des Moines, IA office)
New Hampshire	1 Pillsbury Street Suite 201 Concord, NH 03301-3556	P (603) 225-1450 F (603) 225-1459	Shireen Tilley
New Jersey	44 South Clinton, Suite 312 Trenton, NJ 08609-1507	P (609) 989-0474 F (609) 989-2304	Peter Heinaru, acting (located in Baltimore, MD office)
New Mexico	120 S. Federal Place Room 315 Santa Fe, NM 87501-2026	P (505) 988-6577 F (505) 988-6661	Ernesto Ramos
Nevada	400 S. Virginia Street - Suite548 Reno, NV 89501	P (775) 686-5872 F (775) 686-5877	Craig Warner
New York	Leo O'Brien Federal Bldg. 1 Clinton Square, Suite 900 Albany, NY 12207	P (518) 431-4150 F (518) 431-4154	Donna Smith
North Carolina	Federal Bldg, PO Century Station 300 Fayetteville Street Mall, R. 131 Raleigh, NC 27601	P (919) 856-4731 F (919) 856-4738	Robert Winston
North Dakota	See South Dakota address		John Pohlman

Ohio	51 North High Street Suite 800 Columbus, OH 43215	P (614) 469-7441 F (614) 469-2125	Paul Schrader (also N. Central cluster Area Mgr.)
Oklahoma	215 Dean A. McGee Suite 324 Oklahoma City, OK 73102	P (405) 231-5201 F (405) 231-4329	Daniel Dunlap, acting
Oregon	2010 Lloyd Center Portland, OR 97232	P (503) 231-2103 F (503) 231-2106	Sara Wittenberg
Pennsylvania	Robert N.C. Nix Federal Building 900 Market Street, Room 229 Philadelphia, PA 19107	P (215) 597-2806 F (215) 597-2807	Jorina Ahmed
Puerto Rico	150 Carlos Chardon Ave. Suite 662 San Juan, PR 00918-1737	P (787) 766-5314 F (787) 766-5189	Loretta Cordova
Rhode Island	400 Westminster Street Room 203 Providence, RI 02903	P (401) 528-5426 F (401) 528-5220	Vincent Marzullo
South Carolina	1835 Assembly Street Suite 872 Columbia, SC 29201-2430	P (803) 765-5771 F (803) 765-5777	Jerome Davis
South Dakota	225 S. Pierre Street Room 225 Pierre, SD 57501-2452	P (605) 224-5996 F (605) 224-9201	John Pohlman
Tennessee	233 Cumberland Bend Drive, Suite 112 Nashville, TN 37228	P (615) 736-5561 F (615) 736-7937	Jerry Herman
Texas	300 E. 8th St., Suite G-100 Austin, TX 78701-3220	P (512) 916-5671 F (512) 916-5806	Jerry Thompson
Utah	125 South State Street	P (801) 524-5411	Rick Crawford

	Suite 8416 Bennett Federal Building Salt Lake City, UT 84138	F (801) 524-3599	(also Pacific cluster Area Mgr)
Vermont	See New Hampshire address		Shireen Tilley
Virginia	400 North 8th Street, Suite 446 P. O. Box 10066 Richmond, VA 23240-1832	P (804) 771-2197 F (804) 771-2157	Thomas Harmon
Washington	Jackson Federal Bldg. 915 Second Ave., Suite 3190 Seattle, WA 98174-1103	P (206) 220-7745 F (206) 553-4415	Tom Hulscher, acting
Wisconsin	310 W. Wisconsin Ave. Room 1240 Milwaukee, WI 53203-2211	P (414) 297-1118 F (414) 297-1863	Linda Sunde
West Virginia	10 Hale Street Suite 203 Charleston, WV 25301-1409	P (304) 347-5246 F (304) 347-5464	Judith Russell
Wyoming	308 West 21st Street Suite 203 Cheyenne, WY 82001-3663	P (307) 772-2385 F (307) 772-2389	Patrick Gallizzi

Cluster Area Manager Phone Numbers and Addresses

Cluster and States	Address	Phone Numbers	Area Manager
Atlantic Cluster New Jersey, Maryland, Delaware, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New York, Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire	O'Neill Federal Building 10 Causeway Street, Rm. 473 Boston, MA 02222-1038	P (617) 565-7001 F (617) 565-7011 Or 565-8607	Mal Coles
North Central Cluster Illinois, Indiana, Iowa Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, Ohio, South Dakota, North Dakota, Wisconsin	51 North High Street, Suite 800 Columbus, OH 43215	P (614) 469-7452 F (614) 469-2125	Paul Schrader
Pacific Cluster Alaska, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming	125 South State Street Suite 8416 Bennett Federal Building Salt Lake City, UT 84138	P (801) 524-5411 F (801) 524-3599	Rick Crawford
Southern Cluster Alabama, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia	75 Piedmont Avenue, N.E. Room 902 Atlanta, GA 30303-2587	P (404) 331-4646 F (404) 331-2898	Darryl James
Southwestern Cluster Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas	999 Eighteenth Street Suite 1440 South Denver, CO 80202-2499	P (303) 312-7959 F (303) 312-7954	Kathie Ferguson

Corporation Service Center Addresses and Phone Numbers

Service Center	Address	*Phone Numbers*	*Director*
Atlantic Cluster New Jersey, Maryland, Delaware, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New York, Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire	801 Arch Street Suite 103 Philadelphia, PA 19107	P (215) 597-3471 F (215) 597-4933	Rocco Gaudio
North Central Cluster Illinois, Indiana, Iowa Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, Ohio, South Dakota, North Dakota, Wisconsin	77 W. Jackson Blvd. Suite 442 Chicago, IL 60604	P (312) 353-7700 F (312) 353-5343	Tom Wiora
Pacific Cluster Alaska, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming	2201 Broadway Suite 510 Oakland, CA 94612	P (510) 273-0151 F (510) 273-0150	Jim Phipps
Southern Cluster Alabama, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia	60 Forsyth Street Suite 3 M40 Atlanta, GA 30303-3104	P (404) 562-4055 F (404) 562-4071	Veda Williams, acting
Southwestern Cluster Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas	1999 Bryan Street Suite 2050 Dallas, TX 75201	P (214) 880-7070 F (214) 880-7074	Larry Floyd