

**AMERICORPS*VISTA PRISONER REENTRY INITIATIVE
AN INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT (IAA)
BETWEEN THE
COMMUNITY CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICE
OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
AND
CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE
AMERICORPS*VISTA**

INTRODUCTION

This Interagency Agreement (IAA) between the Community Capacity Development Office (CCDO), Office of Justice Programs (OJP), U.S. Department of Justice (USDOJ) and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) is entered into for the purpose of developing and implementing an AmeriCorps*VISTA ex-offender, prisoner reentry volunteer initiative.

I. BACKGROUND/AUTHORITY

A. CCDO Authority

This IAA is authorized in accordance with the general cooperative authority of the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act, 31 U.S.C. § 6505, and the Economy Act, 31 U.S.C. 1535 and Public Law 108-447, Consolidated Appropriation for 2005. The Community Capacity Development Office (CCDO) is a new office within the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) which was established in 1984 to provide federal leadership in developing the nation's capacity to prevent and control crime, administer justice, and assist crime victims. OJP carries out this mission by forming partnerships with other federal, state, and local agencies, as well as national and community-based organizations. CCDO oversees Operation Weed and Seed which aims to prevent, control, and reduce violent crime, drug abuse, and gang activity in more than 300 targeted high-crime neighborhoods across the country. The strategy involves a two-pronged approach: Law enforcement agencies and prosecutors cooperate in "weeding out" violent crime... while other partners focus on "seeding in" social services and neighborhood revitalization efforts. This comprehensive, holistic approach to community building combines the best of law enforcement and community policing with prevention, intervention, and neighborhood restoration.

CCDO encourages coordination between another OJP program, the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI) authorized at 42 U.S.C. 3797w et seq. and Weed and Seed, since many ex-offenders are returning to Weed and Seed neighborhoods. SVORI is a multi-agency effort which funds 69 grantees to develop, implement, enhance, and evaluate reentry strategies that will ensure the safety of the community and reduce serious, violent crime and recidivism. The initiative includes the development of model reentry programs that first engage the offenders while

incarcerated, and then provide the necessary oversight and support services during the transition back into the community.

B. CNCS Authority

CNCS was created by the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, Public Law 103-82, 42 U.S.C. Section 12501 et seq. to “meet the unmet human, educational, environmental, and public safety needs of the United States, without displacing existing workers; renew the ethic of civic responsibility and the spirit of community throughout the United States;...encourage citizens of the United States, regardless of age, income, or disability, to engage in full-time or part-time national service; reinvent government to eliminate duplication, support locally established initiatives, require measurable goals for performance, and offer flexibility in meeting those goals;...and provide tangible benefits to the communities in which national service is performed.” CNCS is authorized to enter into contracts, and cooperative and interagency agreements, with Federal agencies to conduct activities necessary to assist CNCS in carrying out the duties of CNCS under the national service laws, 42 U.S.C. § 12651g(b). As the Federal entity principally involved in the AmeriCorps*VISTA prisoner reentry initiative, CNCS is authorized to administer funds provided by the USDOJ, 42 U.S.C. § 5048.

II. PURPOSES

This IAA is entered into for the purpose of establishing a collaboration between the United States Department of Justice’s Community Capacity Development Office (CCDO) and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) to accomplish the following:

- A.** Reduce ex-offender recidivism and crime with a focus on Weed and Seed communities, and promote successful reentry into society by connecting mayoral and DOJ reentry initiatives with linkages to volunteer support and grassroots and faith-based and community initiatives. Promote ex-offender, youth and family empowerment in the reentry process through holistic leveraging of public and private resources for housing, employment, life skills, and mentoring for children of prisoners and their families.
- B.** Build capacity for President Bush’s reentry and mentoring initiatives in Weed and Seed and other communities using AmeriCorps*VISTA member support to establish volunteer hubs, in collaboration with the U.S. Conference of Mayors Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives/Reentry Task Force, the USDOJ, Labor and other federal partners, state service commissions, and correction institutions.

NOW, THEREFORE, the parties mutually agree as follows:

III. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CCDO

In the spirit of collaboration, the following responsibilities of CCDO are delineated below. In furtherance of this effort, CCDO agrees to participate directly in the following activities over the next year. While certain responsibilities are shared by both parties, other responsibilities are carried out individually by CCDO, as follows:

- A.** Promote the President's prisoner reentry initiatives.
- B.** Identify and recommend target Weed and Seed communities and local sponsors for the placement of AmeriCorps*VISTA members in cooperation with CNCS.
- C.** Provide CNCS with a list of applicable U.S. Attorney's Office liaisons, Weed and Seed Site Coordinators', and SVORI grantee's contact information.
- D.** Provide \$200,000 through an interagency agreement with CNCS to support the assignment of AmeriCorps*VISTA members to prisoner reentry projects in Weed and Seed and SVORI neighborhoods.
- E.** Provide up to \$300,000 in training and technical assistance resources to support: Vista members in the areas of re-entry service delivery, Weed and Seed strategy/implementation, and community collaboration/facilitation as well as selected Re-entry Special Emphasis areas.
- F.** Disseminate information and resources about the initiative at CCDO conferences and meetings as appropriate.

IV. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CNCS

- A.** Promote the President's prisoner reentry initiatives.
- B.** Identify and recommend target communities (to include Weed and Seed sites) and local sponsors for the placement of AmeriCorps*VISTA members in cooperation with CCDO.
- C.** Administer the AmeriCorps*VISTA Prisoner Reentry program to include the selection of local sponsor(s); oversight of the sponsor(s); pre-service training for the AmeriCorps*VISTA members and all other responsibilities associated with management of the program.
- D.** Provide semi-annual reports to CCDO outlining programmatic achievements to date, including a description of the involvement of Weed and Seed sites, an accounting for the person months of VISTA volunteer activity completed, and a summary of identified initiative outcomes.
- E.** Identify and/or provide additional training and technical assistance resources as appropriate and subject to funding availability.

F. Disseminate information and resources about the initiative at CNCS conferences and meetings as appropriate.

V. STRATEGY

A. Overall

CNCS is collaborating with CCDO to develop national service projects supporting reentry, housing, employment, and mentoring initiatives in at least ten cities to be mutually identified by CNCS and CCDO in FY 2005. CNCS plans to engage up to 36 AmeriCorps*VISTA members who will build the capacity of organizations and communities in support of reentry initiatives in these cities. Since AmeriCorps*VISTA projects are typically developed with a three-year project life cycle, both CNCS and CCDO intend for this initiative to extend over three years, subject to successful implementation and the availability of funds.

B. Program Strategy

CNCS will consider project applications that comply with the requirements of the AmeriCorps*VISTA program and address poverty-related problems.

To the extent possible, each local project will build into its reentry program the leveraging of community resources including USDOJ Weed and Seed sites and SVORI (Serious and Violent Offenders Reentry Initiative) grantees, as well as the leveraging of volunteers to support programs and engage community-based organizations, including faith-based organizations and programs in local initiatives in collaboration with local mayors and appropriate state agencies.

Programmatic activities conducted by sponsoring organizations may include, but are not limited to:

- 1) **Housing:** Providing newly released ex-offenders with a positive living environment that serves to acclimate them to life on the outside while helping them develop marketable skills.
- 2) **Family Strengthening:** Teaching ex-offenders and their families the techniques necessary to creating a caring, healthy and supportive family environment.
- 3) **Life Skills:** Teaching prisoners and former prisoners how to live in society through training in conflict resolution, financial planning, asset building, decision-making and other related areas.
- 4) **Employment:** Assisting former prisoners in acquiring the skills they will need to be competitive in the job market and assisting them in finding jobs.
- 5) **Mentoring:** Providing ex-offenders with an adult mentor to be their friend and help them learn about forming positive relationships and living in society.

- 6) **Substance Abuse Prevention:** Offering treatment or counseling to ex-offenders who are addicted to drugs or at risk of becoming addicted.

C. AmeriCorps*VISTA Member Strategy

Developing re-entry programs and programmatic needs may differ by community; consequently, CNCS and the AmeriCorps*VISTA program are not advocating any specific model. However, the requirements of AmeriCorps*VISTA member service must be followed. Therefore, AmeriCorps*VISTA members may be assigned the role of capacity developer, but may not perform direct service. Appropriate activities for AmeriCorps*VISTA members include, but are not limited to:

- 1) Leveraging public and private sector resources in support of programs such as mentoring, housing, job readiness/job placement, life skills, conflict resolution, addiction counseling, and family reintegration.
- 2) Assisting sponsoring organizations in designing and establishing programs and activities that focus on developing successful intervention strategies.
- 3) Building local networks and collaborative efforts.
- 4) Working with the faith and secular community to engage them in local re-entry initiatives.
- 5) Engaging the traditional volunteer community in local re-entry initiatives.
- 6) Developing community volunteer programs to provide trained community volunteers to programs such as the mentoring of ex-offenders and their families.
- 7) Working with the criminal justice system and prisons in developing re-entry program initiatives.

AmeriCorps*VISTA members will carry out a variety of activities under the daily supervision of the project sponsor.

VI. FUNDING

- A. For FY 2005, CCDO will transfer \$200,000 to CNCS through Intra-governmental Payment and Collections no later than June 2005. These funds will provide for allowances, stipends, benefits and other support costs (not including end of service stipends or education awards) for up to 16 AmeriCorps*VISTA members.

From: OJP/CCDO
Agency Location Code 15-04-0001
Appropriation Symbol 15560334
DUNS# 126547095

To: CNCS
Agency Location Code 95-550001
Appropriation Symbol 9550103
DUNS# 796975837
Tax ID 52-0971471

- B.** CNCS will commit up to \$75,600 (16 x \$4,725) for educational awards and/or end-of-service stipends for FY 2005 to underwrite the costs of the CCDO sponsored AmeriCorps*VISTA members, as well as covering other support costs including, but not limited to, pre-service orientation (PSO), travel to PSO, health care and child care.
- C.** For FY 2005, CNCS will provide all costs (consistent with the costs in Section A and B above) for an additional 20 AmeriCorps*VISTA members (for a total of 34) in support of this initiative.

In summary, for FY 2005 the following funds will be committed by each agency for the provision of services for a minimum of 36 AmeriCorps*VISTA members:

- 1) CCDO pays \$200,000 for up to 16 AmeriCorps*VISTA members.
 - 2) CNCS pays for an additional 20 AmeriCorps*VISTA members and for all costs specified in VI. B above.
- D.** This interagency agreement may be renewed for FY 2006 and FY 2007, subject to CNCS and CCDO approval, the successful implementation of the FY 2005 activities and the availability of funds.

VII. MODIFICATIONS, TERMINATION, AND SEVERABILITY

- A.** CNCS and CCDO may mutually agree to modify or terminate this agreement in whole or in part at any time. Either party may unilaterally terminate the agreement, after 30 days advance written notice, if it is in the best interest of any of the parties. The termination notice must specify the reason for the termination action and the proposed effective date.
- B.** If any provision of this agreement is construed as illegal or invalid, this will not affect the legality or validity of any of the other provisions contained in this agreement. The illegal or invalid provision will be deemed stricken and deleted from the agreement to the same extent and affect as if it never existed, but all other provisions will continue in affect.

VIII. PUBLIC INFORMATION COORDINATION

Public disclosure of information regarding activities conducted under this IAA will be subject to the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. § 552) as well as the Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C. § 552a, as amended). For information not subject by law to mandatory disclosure, the parties shall consult regarding any disclosure of requested information. Releases to the press, public announcements, and communication with the Congress concerning joint programs conducted under this IAA may be made jointly or by either agency following coordination with the other agency.

IX. POINTS OF CONTACT

Each party shall have a point of contact to address programmatic aspects and issues of the AmeriCorps*VISTA ex-offender, prisoner reentry volunteer initiative. The points of contact are as follows:

For the Department of Justice, Community Capacity Development Office (CCDO):

Nelson Hernandez, Director
Community Capacity Development Office
Office of Justice Programs
U.S. Department of Justice
810 7th Street, NW, 6th floor
Washington, DC 20531

With copies to: Kathleen Severens, Reentry Special Initiatives
Community Capacity Development Office
Office of Justice Programs
U.S. Department of Justice
810 7th Street, NW, 6th floor
Washington, DC 20531

For the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS):

Kathleen Ferguson, Acting Director
AmeriCorps*VISTA
Corporation for National & Community Service
1201 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20525

With copies to: Carol Rogers, Senior Program Specialist
AmeriCorps*VISTA
Corporation for National & Community Service
1201 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20525

Paul Schrader, Area Manager and Ohio State Program Director
Corporation for National & Community Service
51 North High Street, Suite 800
Columbus, OH 43215

and

David Caprara, Director
Faith Based & Community Initiatives
Corporation for National & Community Service
1201 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20525

X. EFFECT ON OTHER ACTIVITIES:

This IAA is designed to improve the efficiency of government and does not confer any rights on any other party. Nothing in this IAA shall be interpreted as limiting, superseding, or otherwise affecting either agency's normal operations in carrying out its statutory or regulatory duties. This IAA does not limit or restrict either agency from participating in similar activities or arrangements with other entities.

Except as otherwise expressly provided herein, this IAA constitutes the entire agreement between CCDO and CNCS with respect to the matters set forth herein and supersedes any documents prepared before this IAA to the extent those documents may be inconsistent with this IAA. Nothing in this IAA precludes CCDO and CNCS from agreeing to amendments to this IAA.

XI. PERIOD OF AGREEMENT

This interagency agreement shall become effective upon the signature of the parties and shall terminate the earlier of three years from that date, or at the point when all AmeriCorps*VISTA members assigned to AmeriCorps*VISTA prisoner reentry projects have had the opportunity to successfully complete one year of AmeriCorps*VISTA service. No AmeriCorps*VISTA members supported by CCDO funds will be assigned to these projects until CCDO funding is transferred to the Corporation.

The parties whose signatures appear below attest to having the authority to enter into this interagency agreement and agree that this interagency agreement will become effective upon the signature of all the parties.

SIGNATURES

CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL and COMMUNITY SERVICE

Kathleen Ferguson, Acting Director
AmeriCorps*VISTA
Corporation for National & Community Service

Date

OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

Regina B. Schofield
Assistant Attorney General

Date

Nelson Hernandez, Director
Community Capacity Development Office

Date