



Volunteer Maryland VISTA



Volunteer Maryland (VM), a program of the Governor's Office, builds stronger, healthier communities by developing programs that meet critical needs in the areas of education, human needs, public safety, homeland security, and the environment. In partnership with the Corporation for National and Community Service, VM serves as an intermediary agency for nonprofit organizations that address the root causes of poverty and work to bring Maryland citizens or communities out of poverty. These organizations, called Sponsors, apply through VM to host up to three AmeriCorps★VISTA members for one-year full-time terms of national service.

AmeriCorps★VISTA

AmeriCorps★VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) is a full-time, national service program for individuals interested in developing lasting solutions to the problems of poverty in America. AmeriCorps★VISTA members serve in community and faith-based nonprofit organizations and with other agencies and local governments to develop and expand services and programs that help bring low-income people out of poverty.

The VISTA program has been addressing the needs of impoverished communities since 1965. In total, more than 146,000 individuals have joined forces with 13,000 local organizations to address poverty across the nation.

Program Priorities

Volunteer Maryland AmeriCorps★VISTA projects last for one year, with the possibility of renewal for up to two additional years. Because projects are time-limited, it is essential to develop a plan for sustaining project activities beyond this time frame. Sustainability is a top priority for all VISTA placements, projects, and Sponsor applications.

The role of the AmeriCorps★VISTA member is primarily to build the capacity and sustainability of the project and community, and, ultimately, to work themselves out of a position. AmeriCorps★VISTA members perform capacity building activities at the Sponsor agency; they do not perform direct community service (e.g. tutoring children, building houses, or delivering meals to homebound seniors).

Please note that Volunteer Maryland VISTA members do not serve as volunteer coordinators. For information about the VM volunteer coordinator program, please visit www.volunteermaryland.org.

Volunteer Maryland VISTA members serve in one of three assignment areas: resource development, marketing and technology, and evaluation.

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT	MARKETING AND TECHNOLOGY	EVALUATION
Research and write grant proposals	Develop a web site	Develop evaluation tools, including surveys and questionnaires
Develop template letters	Create an e-newsletter template and distribution schedule	Interview stakeholders
Create a donor database	Increase agency presence in “Web 2.0” (facebook, linkedin, blogs, wiki, etc.)	Develop procedures for continued evaluation and improvement
Conduct outreach to potential donors	Design promotional videos, Power Point presentations, and display boards	Write report on program outcomes

If you have an idea for a VISTA assignment that falls outside of the positions above, please contact Linda Kokenge at 410-767-6219, lkokenge@volunteermaryland.org, to discuss it prior to application submission.

Sponsor Agency Eligibility

Sponsors are nonprofit and government agencies that work to bring Maryland citizens out of poverty. Their programs and services may include job training, literacy, financial counseling, and more. Sponsors have a commitment to increasing their organizational capacities to serve Maryland communities, and see AmeriCorps ★ VISTA as a vital resource for helping them meet the needs of impoverished citizens and communities.

To be eligible, Sponsors must:

- Be a 501(c)(3) nonprofit or a government agency.
- Have at least one full-time staff member (paid or unpaid).
- Provide a professional work environment and regular direct supervision for the VISTA member.
- Have been operational for at least one year.
- Not concurrently host a Volunteer Maryland Coordinator.

Up to three AmeriCorps ★ VISTA members may be placed at one Sponsor agency; however, a separate application must be submitted for each VISTA requested.

Sponsors are required to conduct all VISTA member recruitment and supervision including, but not limited to, advertising to recruit qualified candidates, providing a functioning work space and at least \$300 to cover work-related or in-state training travel costs for the VISTA member. The rate and process for reimbursement is determined by the Sponsor Agency.

Sponsors are also encouraged, but not required, to support VISTA member’s professional development by providing funds for relevant training, conferences, or other opportunities.

Sponsor Agency Selection Process

- Step One: Interested agencies submit the Sponsor application to VM by November 19, 2010.
- Step Two: Applicants are notified by VM of application receipt.
- Step Three: Applications are reviewed and scored. Applicants are sent a review report; if minimum requirements are met, a site visit is held.
- Step Four: VM staff conduct site visits for all potential Sponsors; at visits, staff will negotiate VISTA placements, and work with the Sponsor applicant to develop a VISTA Assignment Description (workplan).
- Step Five: If accepted, selected Sponsors attend a Supervisor Training facilitated by VM; the first Supervisor Training will occur on March, 2011.

Selected Sponsors enter into a competitive pool for AmeriCorps ★ VISTA recruitment. If the Sponsor fails to recruit a qualified candidate, the agency may submit a new Sponsor application to VM in the next application cycle.

AmeriCorps ★ VISTA members serve for one calendar year; the terms of service begin immediately following the mandatory Pre-Service Orientation (PSO). Pre-Service Orientation is conducted by the regional AmeriCorps ★ VISTA staff. Pre-Service Orientation dates are not yet determined for 2011 and are subject to the availability of AmeriCorps ★ VISTA funds.

Key Application Elements

Community Need: The proposal must make a clear connection between the service of the VISTA member and the eradication of poverty. The project must address a poverty related need that focuses on assisting individuals and communities move out of poverty—rather than making poverty more tolerable.

Sustainability: The project must be designed to yield results beyond the member's term of service. The Sponsor describes a plan for continuing the project after the VISTA member completes the term of service.

Performance Measurement: The impact of the project and VISTA member's service is measurable during or by the end of the AmeriCorps service year. The Sponsor agency has the ability and evaluation tools to measure both the outputs of the VISTA member's service and community outcomes or results of the service.

Overall Project Management: The Sponsor has the capacity to recruit, train, and supervise the VISTA member. A training and supervision plan is clearly described.

The Volunteer Maryland Sponsor Application will be available at www.volunteermaryland.org/vista in March, 2010.