



AmeriCorps VISTA Request for Concept Papers

Spokane County United Way, Intermediary Sponsor

Spokane County United Way (SCUW) has been designated by the Corporation for National Service (CNCS) as an intermediary sponsor to support the selection, placement and support for AmeriCorps VISTA members in our community. VISTA members serve full time fighting poverty, making our community safer, stronger, and healthier and improving the lives of our most vulnerable citizens.

Spokane County United Way is committed to helping build capacity within our nonprofit community by placing and supporting VISTA members in local programs that align with our vision for a more educated, healthier and prosperous community. Our vision guides our work which is aimed at reducing the educational achievement gap by 50%, increasing the prevalence of safe, healthy families, and increasing the number of financially stable households in Spokane County.

These goals align directly with the following AmeriCorps VISTAs project focus areas:

- *Economic Opportunity:* Fighting poverty by creating businesses, expanding access to technology, and recruiting volunteers to teach literacy and strengthening antipoverty groups.
- *Education:* Increasing access to services and resources to improve educational outcomes from school readiness to K-12 and post-secondary access and success.
- *Healthy Futures:* Building resilience and changing lives by keeping children nurtured and safe; promoting healthy choices through education and outreach, drug and alcohol prevention and recovery; and connecting low-income families to health services. Projects focused on opioid addiction prevention and recovery are particularly encouraged.

Additional AmeriCorps VISTA focus areas include:

- *Veterans and Military Families:* Supporting projects that focus on low-income veterans and military families' economic opportunity, educational success, and healthy futures.
- *Disaster Recovery:* Long-term disaster recovery projects, particularly those focused on providing housing, promoting restoration, and initiatives that address the long-term needs of affected, low-income populations.

What is AmeriCorps VISTA?

VISTA, or Volunteers in Service to America, was founded in 1965 as a national service program designed to fight poverty in America. AmeriCorps VISTA taps the skills, talents and passion of more than 8,000 volunteers annually to support community efforts to overcome poverty. AmeriCorps VISTA is governed by a federal agency, the Corporation for National and Community Service. Nonprofit organizations, Native American tribes, and city, state, and local government agencies are eligible to apply as AmeriCorps VISTA sponsors.



Spokane County United Way

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF HOSTING A PROJECT?

- Opportunity to increase and enhance your organization's capacity in a sustainable manner
- Support in recruitment and placement of VISTA members
- Ongoing training and support for VISTA members and site supervisors
- Enhanced partnerships with other community organizations
- Recognition by local, state, and national decision makers for being part of national service and supporting our community

WHAT MAKES A GOOD VISTA PROJECT?

VISTA projects are typically granted for three years and are reviewed on a yearly basis to ensure performance measures are being met and the project is still relevant and useful. Projects must be developed in accordance with AmeriCorps VISTA's core principles: an anti-poverty focus, community empowerment, sustainable solutions, and capacity building. Some examples of how VISTAs have been used include program development, volunteer program development, resource development, and community organization. ***VISTAs are not allowed to engage in direct service. Projects containing direct service will not be accepted.***

What are the Responsibilities of the Host Organization?

- Sign a VISTA Memorandum of Understanding acknowledging understanding of and commitment to the VISTA program.
- Meet the required organizational site support payment.
- Be experienced in the issues related to the project and in the programmatic needs being addressed.
- Actively participate in recruitment, interview, and selection of a VISTA member, and support the recruited VISTA member in appropriate capacity-building roles. Also, agree to follow member recruitment and selection timeline.
- Provide a staff member who will fulfill all the responsibilities of a site supervisor, including but not limited to, attending site supervisor trainings and meetings, providing orientation and ongoing training and support to the VISTA member, and approving the member's time on a monthly basis.
- Adhere to performance measure documentation and reporting, as outlined by the AmeriCorps VISTA program.
- Ensure necessary resources are available for the VISTA member to perform their tasks, including office space, phone, email, and computer access.
- Reimburse the VISTA member for mileage and/or transportation costs used in support of their project.
- Communicate directly with the VISTA Program Director and other United Way staff about any concerns related to or impacting the VISTA program.



Spokane County United Way

What is the Host Organization's Financial Commitment?

Partner organizations hosting VISTA members are required to pay a site support payment of \$4,000 annually to Spokane County United Way. The amount charged is subject to an annual review and adjustment. This payment offsets SCUW's costs of the actual VISTA member and to provide a team comprised of a VISTA director, leader and grants manager who oversee and manage the project grants, communicate and report to CNCS and provide support to the host sites and individual VISTAs. The host site will also be responsible for providing the VISTA mileage reimbursement, desk space, a computer, and training opportunities.

How are VISTA Members Compensated?

VISTA members serve on a full-time basis and receive training, a living allowance (currently \$12,456), limited health coverage, child care if needed, and an education award (currently \$6,095) after the successful completion of a term of service. Members may choose an End of Service stipend (\$1,800) in place of the education award.

AmeriCorps VISTA Concept Paper Timeline

From the initial concept paper to the VISTA placement takes approximately 4-5 months. Selection is based on alignment with the focus areas of AmeriCorps VISTA and Spokane County United Way, overall project quality and feasibility, and available slots. Approved projects will be put on hold should there be no current available slots.

Approximate timeline:

- Organization turns in concept paper to Spokane County United Way
- SCUW reviews the application and decides if the project will be passed on to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) State Office (up to 3 weeks)
- CNCS grants officer review (2-4 weeks)
- Concept paper is refined in order to match CNCS priorities and requirements (up to 2 weeks)
- VISTA Assignment Description (VAD) developed (1-2 weeks) and reviewed by CNCS grants officer (1-2 weeks)
- Alignment with CNCS National Performance Measures
- Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by host site and Spokane County United Way
- VISTA member recruitment (4-5 weeks)
- VISTA placement starts with Virtual Member Orientation approximately 3 weeks after selection
 - *Although we accept concept papers at any time there are two VISTA Member start dates: one in August and one in November*

If you have any questions about the process or AmeriCorps VISTA please contact Aiden Sanders

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or the current VISTA Leader at AmeriCorpsVISTA@unitedwayspokane.org.