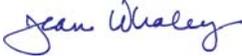




September 9, 2005

MEMORANDUM

To: Corporation State Offices

From: 
Jean Whaley
AmeriCorps*VISTA Director

Subject: Guidance for Disaster Relief Efforts and AmeriCorps*VISTA

This memo is to provide guidance for dealing with requests from Sponsors who submit requests to allow VISTA members placed at their site to participate in the disaster relief effort following Hurricane Katrina. Separate guidance on supporting current members who have been displaced will follow as will a decision on whether the Associates program will be used this fall.

Limited Direct Service for New and Current Projects

While short-term response and relief efforts of a direct service nature can be approved, the overall effort of the project should continue to focus on sustainable activities. If necessary, project applications can be amended with new project plans with performance measures focusing on long-term recovery efforts by the AmeriCorps*VISTA project in response to Hurricane Katrina. If additional members or support dollars are approved, MA amendments will need to be executed; all MAs should already include the disaster response clause in Section 3.

Requests for additional MSYs and support dollars should be directed to Howard Turner via email. These requests must pertain directly to activities related to Hurricane Katrina; requests for supplemental support grants due to the higher cost of gasoline can not be considered at this time.

State Executive Review for New Projects

The governors of Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas and Alabama will receive letters from this office notifying them of the potential for new AmeriCorps*VISTA project development and asking for swift responses to any requests they receive from the State Offices to shorten the legislative forty-five (45) day waiting period. Per the General Counsel's office, governors' letters sent by the State Offices must still include specific information regarding the sponsor and a project description although one letter could reference multiple new projects.

Deferral of Pre-Service Orientation

Sponsors have also inquired about receiving a training waiver to bring individuals into service to assist in the relief effort. Current VISTA guidance states that, except in rare circumstances,

every candidate must attend a PSO before beginning service as a VISTA. AmeriCorps*VISTA is allowing training deferments for members performing assignments focusing on disaster recovery. Candidates must be made fully aware of the requirements of the AmeriCorps*VISTA program, including the twelve month term of service. All the terms, conditions and benefits of service apply to these members.

State Program Directors must request in writing to the Area Manager the placement of members before attending a PSO. This request must include assurances that a complete member application has been received and reviewed by CNCS staff. If the member is in a national project, the manager of that project (in Headquarters or in some cases in a State Office) must also be copied on the request. The Area Manager must approve all training deferments. This approval is a one-time exception to the requirement regarding scarce skill or cost share applicants.

Members must attend a PSO in the next available training window

Disaster Response Cooperative Agreement

The Corporation recently provided a mechanism, a CNCS Disaster Response Cooperative Agreement, to enable interested Corporation-sponsored programs to participate in disaster response deployments with FEMA or another agency and be eligible to be reimbursed through CNCS for expenses related to the disaster deployment. The Agreement is the legal instrument which must be in place to allow programs to be reimbursed by the Corporation for expenses incurred by the response. Details regarding the agreement, including eligibility criteria, the nature of disaster deployments, the Corporation's expectations for performance upon selection, and the application process, can be found in the documents, which are attached for your convenience.

Briefly:

- If a sponsor has a CNCS Disaster Response Cooperative Agreement in place, it may be contacted for deployment by Cee Cee Molineaux, Emergency Management Coordinator. The managing State Office (and, for multi-state projects, any host state) should be contacted by the sponsor to get programmatic consent.
- If a sponsor does not have a CNCS Disaster Response Cooperative Agreement in place but wishes to have one, it may submit a proposal at any time. In light of the current situation, proposals for the agreement will receive high priority and should be submitted through by the sponsor through the State Office to Hank Oltmann. Following execution of the Cooperative Agreement, the sponsor may be contacted for deployment; the State Office (and, for multi-state projects, any host state) should be contacted by the sponsor to get programmatic consent.

In order to best deal with future disasters, it is recommended that sponsors be asked to consider submitting Cooperative Agreement proposals in advance.

Recovery Efforts without a Cooperative Agreement

Note that if a sponsor does not have a CNCS Disaster Response Cooperative Agreement in place, it is appropriate, with State Office prior approval, to participate in disaster response. Sponsors may contact their local Red Cross chapters or other relief organizations to explore those opportunities. Again, they should also contact their State Office to request programmatic approval but expenses can not be reimbursed.

At this time, AmeriCorps*VISTA is not sending current members from other states to support relief and recovery efforts due to safety and housing concerns. As local sponsoring organizations become ready to accept VISTA resources, we will revisit the possibility of sending current members for either short-term temporary placements or permanent transfers.

State Offices and sponsors should also be encouraged to submit information on members' activities so that the Corporation can be aware of the service of all participants. Please refer to the email sent by Mike Berning on September 8.

If you have any questions regarding this guidance, please contact Rob Cox (rcox@cns.gov) or Kelly Daly (kdaly@cns.gov).