



VISTA

Volunteers In Service To America

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SUMMARY

The New York Corporation State Office (CSO) of the [Corporation for National and Community Service \(CNCS\)](#) seeks concept papers for the AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) program from innovative, high-performing, and outcome-driven organizations that share the AmeriCorps VISTA's mission: providing long-term solutions to eliminate poverty.

This Request for Concept Papers (RFCP) is for placement of AmeriCorps VISTA members contingent on Fiscal Year 2018 federal budget decisions. Organizations interested in sponsoring an AmeriCorps VISTA project in New York are invited to submit a concept paper to the Corporation for National and Community Service New York State Office via eGrants.

FOCUS

The focus of this RFCP is on **opioid programming**. AmeriCorps VISTA Opioid Programming focuses on addressing the opioid crisis in the United States by placing AmeriCorps VISTA members with non-profit organizations, government entities, and tribal nations that are creating or expanding opioid projects targeting low-income communities. The programming treats opioid addiction and recovery as a health issue and fits into the Corporation for National and Community Service's Healthy Futures focus area; however, other focus areas such as education may be impacted. The programming emphasizes prevention, intervention, and treatment. Examples of AmeriCorps VISTA Opioid Programming are provided in the *Resources* section of this document.

Organizations interested in applying for a project not focused on opioid programming may review [AmeriCorps VISTA Program Guidance for Project Sponsors in Fiscal Year 2018](#).

AGENCY DESCRIPTION

The Corporation for National and Community Service (www.nationalservice.gov) is a federal agency that engages more than five million Americans in service through its core programs: [Senior Corps](#) and [AmeriCorps](#), and the [Volunteer Generation Fund \(VGF\)](#). As the nation's largest grant-maker for service and volunteering, CNCS plays a critical role in strengthening America's nonprofit sector and addressing our nation's challenges through service. CNCS's mission is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering.

ELIGIBLE SPONSORS

Public organizations such as state and local government organizations, Indian Tribes, and nonprofit, private organizations may apply to become AmeriCorps VISTA sponsors. All organizations with an IRS 501(c) status that focus on anti-poverty community development are eligible to apply, however, organizations that focus solely on advocacy and lobbying are not eligible.

Organizations can be locally, state, or nationally based. National organizations should consider applying to AmeriCorps VISTA Headquarters for AmeriCorps VISTA sponsorship if AmeriCorps VISTA members will serve in more than one state.

Each AmeriCorps VISTA project's goal must incorporate plans to sustain project outcomes after the project agreement ends. Sponsors must be able to direct the project, recruit, and supervise AmeriCorps VISTA Members, and provide the necessary administrative support to complete project goals.

Organizations that have previously sponsored AmeriCorps VISTA projects may apply only with a new program emphasis and must demonstrate previous AmeriCorps VISTA project success.

AmeriCorps VISTA project beneficiaries are low-income individuals and impoverished poverty communities. Sponsors develop and manage projects with input and involvement from the beneficiaries being served.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Authorized in the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, the AmeriCorps VISTA program supports efforts to eradicate poverty by engaging citizens in a year of service. As defined by the [Domestic Volunteer Service Act](#), the AmeriCorps VISTA program is designed to “generate the commitment of private sector resources, to encourage volunteer service at the local level, to support efforts by local agencies and community organizations to achieve long-term sustainability of projects....” AmeriCorps VISTA projects focus on building organizational capacity and strengthening organizational infrastructure to bring both individuals and communities out of poverty.

The AmeriCorps VISTA program places members at sponsoring organizations. Sponsoring organizations absorb most of the costs for project supervision, administrative overhead, and logistical support. The AmeriCorps VISTA program provides a small living allowance and specified [benefits](#) to members during their service, including an end of service stipend or Eli Segal Education Award. AmeriCorps VISTA resources are intended as short-term support for an organization—project’s last, on average, approximately 3 years. Therefore, a sponsor’s commitment and community buy-in are crucial to a project’s success.

CORE VALUES

AmeriCorps VISTA projects must operate under the following principles:

- **Anti-Poverty Focus** – The purpose of AmeriCorps VISTA is to support efforts to fight poverty. Any nonprofit organization, educational institution, or tribal or public agency with a program that is poverty-related in scope may be considered for AmeriCorps VISTA project sponsorship. The project should address helping individuals and communities out of poverty, not simply making poverty more tolerable through short-term services.
- **Community Empowerment** – Sponsoring organizations ensure that the project engages residents of low-income communities in planning, developing and implementing the project. The project must be responsive and relevant to the lives of the community residents, and should tap into inherent community assets, strengths, and resources.
- **Sustainable Solutions** – AmeriCorps VISTA members provide short-term human resources to build long-term sustainability of anti-poverty programs. All AmeriCorps VISTA projects should be developed with the goal to phase out the need for AmeriCorps VISTA Members and strengthen the ability of the project to continue indefinitely.
- **Capacity Building** – AmeriCorps VISTA members do not provide direct services to low-income individuals; rather they work to increase the capacity of organizations to fight poverty. Through activities such as fundraising, establishment of community volunteer recruitment and

management systems, community outreach, and collaborative development, AmeriCorps VISTA Members mobilize local resources to achieve lasting solutions to poverty. Projects focus on achieving impactful outcomes on the community and/or beneficiary population.

ABOUT AMERICORPS VISTA MEMBERS

AmeriCorps VISTA members come from diverse racial, social, geographic, and economic backgrounds. They live and serve in some of our nation's poorest communities. Each member makes a year-long, full-time commitment to serve at a specific project.

Members provide capacity building services, or in-direct service. AmeriCorps VISTA members do not perform direct service or physical labor. For example, if the proposed project's goal is to prepare first responders to intervene after a drug related incident to help user addicts into treatment, then an AmeriCorps VISTA member could serve as a Community Opioid Addiction Organizer to build the community capacity by recruiting, training, and organizing volunteer agencies to assist with recovery efforts and develop an organizational structure to manage the activities of these partners.

Acting as first responders at drug related incidences or as case managers are not appropriate AmeriCorps VISTA activities. AmeriCorps State, AmeriCorps National, or AmeriCorps NCCC members, however, can perform direct service activities. [More examples](#) about the difference between direct and indirect service are available on the VISTA Campus and the [What VISTAs Members Do](#) section on CNCS's main website.

AmeriCorps VISTA members cannot displace staff positions or staff duties. AmeriCorps VISTA members are not considered employees of sponsoring organizations, nor are they considered employees of the federal government, except in [limited circumstances](#). AmeriCorps VISTA members are a federal resource recruited by a sponsoring organization to accomplish the project's goals.

While in service, AmeriCorps VISTA members receive a modest living allowance. Members also have the option to receive either an [Eli Segal AmeriCorps Education Award](#) or an end-of-service cash stipend after successfully completing a term of service.

Each AmeriCorps VISTA candidate must take a course explaining the [Terms and Conditions](#) of the program before they begin service. A quick overview of the [terms and conditions](#) of the AmeriCorps VISTA program and [limitations on member activities](#) are also available on the VISTA Campus.

AmeriCorps VISTA members must be at least 18 years of age and must be either a U.S. citizen, national, or legal permanent resident alien of the United States.

The project or site where the member serves pays for any service related travel, office space and expenses, such as phone, internet and computer use. Sponsors are expected to have adequate facilities for members to fully perform their service.

CONCEPT PAPER REQUIREMENTS

Applicants must meet the requirements of sponsorship listed in the Concept Paper and the Application for Federal Assistance, as well as the Program Guidance for 2018. More information is available at the [Sponsor a VISTA Project](#) page on CNCS's website.

When completing the application for AmeriCorps VISTA sponsorship, ensure the proposal:

- Reflects AmeriCorps VISTA’s anti-poverty mission and addresses the core principles
- Addresses one or more of the [CNCS Strategic Plan](#) Focus Areas and AmeriCorps VISTA Priorities:

Education	This focus area refers to unmet educational needs within communities, especially those that help at-risk youth to achieve success in school and prevent them from dropping out.
Healthy Futures	This focus area addresses unmet health needs, including access to health care, increasing physical activity and improving nutrition in youth, and increasing seniors’ ability to remain in their own homes.
Veterans and Military Families	This focus area refers to unmet needs of veterans, members of the armed forces, and family members of deployed military personnel.
Economic Opportunity	This focus area addresses unmet needs of economically disadvantaged individuals, including financial literacy, affordable housing, and employment-related assistance.

- Demonstrates an understanding of the AmeriCorps VISTA program within the context national service
- Articulates clearly defined project goals with measurable impact under the appropriate [performance measures](#) for the AmeriCorps VISTA program
- Clearly states the applicant’s financial commitment towards the project and ability to effectively manage AmeriCorps VISTA resources

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

The New York State Office will approve Concept Papers from organizations that demonstrate the greatest ability to effectively manage the project with a high probability of success; have the greatest impact on low-income communities; and address CNCS’s focus areas, as outlined in the Strategic Plan.

Unless it is an Intermediary style program (see A Guide to Becoming an AmeriCorps VISTA Project Sponsor), VISTA projects may be continued for three-to-five years; however, projects are considered for renewal on a year-to-year basis, and granted continuations based on the availability of resources, program performance, and the priorities of CNCS. From the beginning of the project planning process, the sponsor and community must think about how to use the AmeriCorps VISTA project to phase-in other resources and systems to replace the VISTA resource.

NEW YORK STATE OFFICE PROGRAMMING PRIORITIES

The New York State Office seeks concept papers for VISTA projects with a minimum of three full-time AmeriCorps VISTA members. If an applicant is unable to administratively support at least three full-time members, the applicant may collaborate with partnering organizations and consider applying as an intermediary for multiple sites that can host members. Please contact our office for additional guidance on submitting a collaborative proposal. Priority will be given to projects that:

- Address the opioid crisis;

- Include three or more full-time VISTA members;
- Address the needs of rural areas and/or communities with comparatively limited access to resources and/or to communities without significant extant national service resources;
- Address the needs of veterans and/or military families;
- Leverage local funds to support the project.

COST-SHARE, OR SPONSOR MATCH

While AmeriCorps VISTA regulations do not require a non-federal match, in order to maximize federal resources and to keep the federal cost of AmeriCorps VISTA members to a minimum, CNCS looks to sponsoring organizations to help pay the member living allowance for some of the project's members as cost-share members. Organizations that are able to cost-share all or a portion (living allowance only) of the AmeriCorps VISTA members will receive priority consideration. The annual member living allowance in New York State currently ranges from \$12,826 to \$20,641 per year. In exchange for that investment, CNCS covers all the remaining federal program costs for each AmeriCorps VISTA member. CNCS pays the AmeriCorps VISTA members directly and invoices the sponsor monthly for the cost of the living allowance of any cost-share VISTA members.

HOW TO APPLY

Applying to sponsor an AmeriCorps VISTA project is a two-part process. First, an organization must submit a concept paper. Upon approval of the concept paper, the organization will then be invited to submit a full application.

CONCEPT PAPER

Organizations applying to sponsor an AmeriCorps VISTA project in New York are invited to submit a concept paper to the Corporation for National and Community Service New York State Office. We accept concept papers on a rolling basis. **In order to place AmeriCorps VISTA members at the optimal time for your project, you must submit your concept paper no later than 11:59 PM ET on the dates listed in the chart below** through CNCS' web-based application system, [eGrants](#). To create an account and access eGrants, and instructions for the AmeriCorps VISTA Concept Paper, scroll down to the *Resources* section of this document.

Concept papers must be created under the following Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for consideration: **AmeriCorps VISTA State FY 2018 Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA)**.

Only concept papers submitted in eGrants will be considered. Submitting a concept paper does not guarantee approval or resource commitment. Submissions are evaluated on the information included in the narratives and are subject to the availability of current program resources.

Organizations interested in applying for opioid programming projects are encouraged to call or email the NY State Office at ny@cns.gov or 518-649-8042.

FULL APPLICATION

Instructions on submitting the full application will be provided upon approval of the concept paper. Full applications require work plans that identify clear and measureable capacity building-related outcomes.

Priority will be given to applications with work plans that align with CNCS agency wide performance measures. More information on CNCS Performance Measures is in the *Resources* section below.

Once the application is approved, the organization will sign a memorandum of agreement (MA) with CNCS. CNCS Program Officers will work with each organization to provide guidance, technical assistance, and monitoring project progress.

EXPECTATIONS FOR ACCEPTED PROJECTS

Once the MA is signed, Program Officers will work with sponsoring organizations to support their AmeriCorps VISTA project. Sponsors will designate a staff member to supervise the project and participate in a supervisor training prior to recruiting AmeriCorps VISTA candidates. Sponsors are expected to [develop assignment descriptions](#), [recruit](#) and [orient](#) incoming members, and identify [ongoing training](#) opportunities for members who serve at their organization. Sponsors are also expected to [report on project progress](#) and [verify when members serve](#) for the duration of the project.

SCHEDULE

Concept Paper Submission Deadline	For AmeriCorps VISTA Members starting in
Friday, August 10, 2018	November 2018
Friday, September 7, 2018	February or March 2019
Friday, September 28, 2018	June-August 2019

RESOURCES

Any interested organization or individual with additional questions not addressed by this RFCP may contact: NY@cns.gov.

OPIOID PROGRAMMING – SAMPLE ACTIVITIES

AmeriCorps VISTA Opioid Programming focuses on addressing the opioid crisis in the United States by placing AmeriCorps VISTA members with organizations that are creating or expanding opioid prevention and recovery projects targeting low-income communities. The programming treats opioid addiction and recovery as a health issue and fits into the Corporation for National and Community Service’s Healthy Futures focus area; however, other focus areas such as Education may be impacted. The programming emphasizes prevention, intervention, and recovery.

This is not an exhaustive list.

Partnerships:

- Help create new or enhance existing local, regional, or statewide opioid task forces
- Help create new or expand existing partnerships addressing opioids

Leveraging Community Volunteers:

- Recruit community volunteers to serve at programs focusing on opioids
- Establish or expand volunteer management systems for opioid programs

Program Planning, Creation, and Expansion:

- Create action plans for addressing the opioid problem
- Develop new programs or expand existing opioid programming

Outreach:

- Plan and organize awareness campaigns focus on the opioid problem
- Conduct outreach campaigns to make the community aware of resources and agencies that provide services focusing on opioids

Material Development and Training:

- Develop materials and presentations on opioids
- Develop drug prevention curriculum
- Develop and implement an opioid youth prevention education component to an existing summer-time programming -such as summer camps/summer recreational programs-and to existing year-round programming
- Develop program standards for opioid prevention, intervention, and treatment programs ☐ Train community stakeholders, community partners, government entities, and non-profit organizations on opioids and opioid programming ☐ Help plan and conduct opioid prevention summits

Program Development and Implementation:

- Help identify or create recovery programs/services (such as housing, employment, and legal help) or linkages to such programs/services for individuals leaving treatment programs and entering recovery so as to minimize the chances of re-lapse
- Help identify or create programs/services for family members of those receiving prevention, intervention, treatment services
- Help develop reentry programs/services or linkages to such services for youth transitioning from the justice system to prevent youth recidivism and drug use such as opioids
- Help with programs that assist low-income individuals access opioid prevention, intervention, and treatment services

Assessment and Evaluation:

- Conduct community assessment focusing on opioid services and programming
- Collect and analyze data for opioid programs
- Conduct research and study the demographics of recent deaths, related opioid issues including babies born with drug addicted symptoms or the number of opioid related overdoses handled by local hospitals
- Help create or expand programs that collaborate with first responders to intervention after a drug related incident to help user addicts into treatment

Resource Development:

- Identify and write grant applications for funding resources
- Help plan fundraising activities

PROJECT APPLICATION AND DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

- [VISTA 101: Understanding VISTA](#)
- [VISTA 201: A Guide to Applying to become an AmeriCorps VISTA project sponsor](#)
- [AmeriCorps VISTA Supervisors Manual](#)
- [Is AmeriCorps VISTA Right for Your Organization?: A Guide to Becoming an AmeriCorps VISTA Sponsoring Organization](#)

- [Sponsor an AmeriCorps VISTA Project](#)
 - FY2018 Program Guidance
 - AmeriCorps VISTA Concept Paper Instructions
 - AmeriCorps VISTA Project Application and Instructions
- [AmeriCorps VISTA Performance Measures](#)
- [eGrants Log-in screen and tutorial to create and manage an eGrants account](#)
- [AmeriCorps VISTA Performance Measure Module in eGrants](#)
- www.nationalservice.gov
- www.vistacampus.gov

CONTACT

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