



Capacity Building to End Homelessness AmeriCorps VISTA Project Request for Proposals

The Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness is seeking one qualified homeless service organization to host an AmeriCorps VISTA member for a year-long service term focused on **increasing capacity**, with a tentative start date of August 2021.

What is AmeriCorps VISTA?

AmeriCorps VISTA, administered through the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), is an anti-poverty program that provides full-time service members to non-profit organizations and local agencies that serve low-income communities. VISTA members serve full-time for a year in order to build capacity of these organizations to carry out programs that fight poverty. VISTA holds four core principles that organizations should keep in mind when applying:

- **Anti-Poverty Focus** – To strengthen and support efforts to eliminate and alleviate poverty and address poverty-related problems in the United States. VISTA projects should focus on long-term solutions to poverty rather than short-term services.
- **Community Empowerment** – Each project must be responsive and relevant to the lives of the community residents, and tap into inherent community assets, strengths, and resources.
- **Sustainable Solutions** – VISTA members serve as short-term resources to build the long-term sustainability of anti-poverty programs.
- **Capacity Building** – VISTA members create systems that remain long after their term of service ends. VISTA projects expand the scale, impact, and resource leveraging ability of their sponsor.

Project Overview

MCAH will place eight **Capacity Building to End Homelessness VISTA Project** members statewide with service organizations serving those experiencing or at-risk of homelessness. In order to build long-term stability, members would be placed with agencies where there is a great need for services but a lack of staffing and funding necessary to fill those gaps and create programming and systems. By placing AmeriCorps VISTA members with such organizations, we can support this capacity building through activities such as developing community partnerships, facilitating community engagement, establishing volunteer management systems, and building systems for, and participating in, fundraising.

Members serve one-year terms. Host site organizations, upon submission of required reports and overall compliance and member support success, may have the position renewed annually for an additional service year.

Allowable Activities

The role of the VISTA members is to **build the capacity and sustainability of programs and organizations that fight poverty in their communities**. The nature of the allowable service activities is indirect, as VISTA members are **not permitted to directly serve clients or other direct service beneficiaries**. All service activities must align with approved performance measures from CNCS.

Limitation on Displacement of Employed Workers and Impairment of Contracts for Service

VISTA members are prohibited from performing activities or duties that would otherwise be carried out by employed workers or would supplant the hiring of or result in the displacement of employed workers or would impair existing contracts for service.

CNCS regulations on non-displacement of employed workers and non-impairment of contracts for service are contained in [45 CFR Part 2556.150](#).

The **Capacity Building to End Homelessness VISTA Project** offers four main service activity areas. Successful applicants will consider their organizational needs, their ability to support service activities throughout the duration of member placement, and their ability to continue with this increased capacity beyond the life of the project.

Service Category	Examples of Activities
Community Awareness and Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - conduct community outreach - host community meetings - create and distribute informational materials about the services provided and organization’s needs - develop presentations, newspaper articles, PSAs - complete a public relations media plan
Developing, Expanding, and Strengthening Partnerships and Networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - research existing and potential partnership opportunities including service providers, private landlords, and housing management companies - develop informational materials to be shared with potential partners - host collaboration meetings and informational sessions - improve communication about community projects among partner organizations
Financial Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - develop a fundraising plan - identify potential fundraising sources - maintain relationships with existing funders - draft and submit grants to state and local funders - facilitate community giving drives
Volunteer Recruitment and Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - develop a volunteer generation and retention plan - clarify volunteer roles and create position descriptions - recruit and coordinate volunteers (may not train or supervise volunteers) - develop various tracking systems - create community partnerships to build a volunteer base - promote community collaboration for volunteer utilization

Program Performance Measures

The program will track data in the following areas. The performance measures applied to individual host sites will depend on the activities proposed.

- Resources Leveraged
 - Monetary Donations solicited by the VISTA
 - In-Kind Donations solicited by the VISTA
- Community Volunteers
 - Number of community volunteers recruited by the VISTA, and hours served
 - Number of community volunteers managed by the VISTA, and hours served

- Partnerships and Networks
 - Number of community organizations that received capacity-building services from the VISTA
 - Number of community organizations that reported the capacity-building services helped to make their organization more effective
 - Number of new and current partnerships being developed/maintained by the VISTA
- Community Awareness & Engagement
 - Number of community awareness and engagement events facilitated by the VISTA
- Anti-Poverty Data (End-Year)
 - For sites that provide direct client services: number of clients served and housed
 - For sites that do not provide direct client services: number of service providers assisted and increased capacity

Host Site Requirements

To qualify for partnership with the VISTA project, the following requirements must be met:

- Be a non-profit organization, government entity, or government institution offering services to those experiencing or at-risk of homelessness
- Be a member of MCAH throughout the length of the project, for the 2021 and 2022 years
- Submit a signed host site agreement
- Utilize the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)
- Provide a yearly, non-refundable host site match fee of **\$6,000**
- Provide a \$200/month housing incentive to members, paid directly to landlords or mortgage providers (direct payments to members is strictly prohibited)
- Provide full-time, on-site supervision from a qualified site supervisor
- Advertise, recruit, and make recommendations for an AmeriCorps member candidate.
- Arrange a designated workspace, computer, phone, and access to any other necessary equipment
- Provide travel reimbursement to several required AmeriCorps VISTA trainings as well as reimbursement for member travel on behalf of the host site
- Facilitate necessary service-related training opportunities for the member
- Send the selected site supervisor to the site supervisor orientation

Host sites will be scored on a rubric regarding compliance and program expectations and requirements. Year-end scoring will be used to determine future program placement.

Site Supervisor Requirements

The site supervisor must:

- Be a full-time employee, physically located at the same office as the member
- Be responsible for the direct day-to-day supervision of the member
- Attend site supervisor orientation
- Provide consistent and adequate onsite supervision, including meeting with the member regularly
- Provide the necessary support to complete the goals and objectives as defined by the VISTA Assignment Description
- Ensure the member is not participating in any prohibited activities
- Ensure the member completes and submits all reporting requirements
- Respond to requests for information from the project

Member Benefits

The following benefits are administered through CNCS for all AmeriCorps VISTA members:

- Living allowance totaling \$13,399 (pre-tax)
- Health benefits (member only) and childcare assistance (eligibility based)
- \$6,345 education award or \$1,800 cash stipend
- Student loan forbearance and accrued interest payment for qualified student loans

Project Restrictions

Per CNCS regulations, the following restrictions apply to member service:

- Providing direct service to clients or service recipients
- Performing administrative and clerical duties, data entry on behalf of others, or janitorial work
- Performing activities that duplicate routine staff functions or displacing paid staff
- Providing religious instruction, conducting worship services, proselytizing or otherwise engaging in religious activities during accrual of service hours
- Participating in political campaigns, lobbying, labor organizing, or otherwise engaging in political activities during accrual of service hours
- Providing a direct benefit to for-profit businesses

Distinctions Between VISTA Members & Employees

Some ways in which supervising VISTAs is similar to supervising employees are:

- VISTAs are expected to act in a professional manner and conduct themselves in accordance with the workplace norms of your organization
- They are subject to the same or similar working conditions as their colleagues and should be oriented to the organization's policies and given any standard staff training at the beginning of the service term
- VISTAs should be included in staff meetings for their department and organization
- Supervisors should give VISTAs appropriate feedback on their performance

Some ways in which supervising VISTAs is different from supervising employees are:

- VISTAs are national service members, and they commit themselves to serving for one year in the community and to the goals of the assigned project
- VISTA members are often early in their career and may need extra guidance and support in adjusting to the organization's workplace norms and establishing professional working habits
- VISTAs serve for limited benefits and are often interested in cultivating an experience that is meaningful both professionally and personally. They may be interested in more coaching, mentoring, and professional development than the average employee. They also may have a deeper appreciation for recognition from your organization and community.
- VISTAs may need extra support integrating into the organization and community quickly and effectively. They need to transition quickly in order to make a difference during their one-year term, and this can be a bigger adjustment for VISTA members who are from outside the community or new to the field in which they are serving.
- Each VISTA has a specific assignment with a capacity-building focus. Other staff in your organization may not recognize the distinct VISTA function, and supervisors play a key role in helping other staff and partners understand both the nature of VISTA service and each VISTA's specific assignment. This includes supporting VISTA members in setting and maintaining boundaries when others ask the VISTA to help with activities unrelated to the VAD.

- VISTAs may be anxious about finances as well as what their next step will be once their service year ends.
- VISTAs cannot be terminated by the site or sponsor, but the sponsor may request the VISTA member's removal from the project.
- Some VISTAs may have years of experience in the workplace and see their service opportunity as a way to transition to a new career field or give back after retiring from employment.

Member Recruitment

Selected host sites will be responsible for recruiting AmeriCorps members to serve at their host site and recommending candidates to the program director for a final interview. Host sites must create a recruitment plan that encourages diversity. This plan must be approved by the program director prior to the search for an AmeriCorps member. Host sites should consider a variety of outlets. Any posting must be clear that this is a service opportunity with a living stipend and should not advertise as employment or an internship/volunteer opportunity. When recruiting, host sites must emphasize what AmeriCorps is and ensure that the candidate understands. More recruitment information will be provided after site selection.

Host sites will be required to submit two top candidates per awarded position for final consideration with the program. Host sites must submit candidates by the deadlines provided after host site selection in order for final screening, selection, and onboarding to occur before the intended start date. Host sites will recruit for the August start date. Should a candidate not be secured in time, additional start dates will be provided, but a start date cutoff will be communicated, and members may not be recruited for the program year beyond that date.

Member Commitment

While national service should not be considered a "job," members and host sites should see this much like a full-time job regarding the commitment and expectations. The ideal candidate for national service is not someone looking simply for a job or solely to enhance their resume. Rather, they will demonstrate an interest in service to their community and an understanding of the time requirement and living stipend conditions.

Should a member choose to leave service early, the ability of the program to replace this member is limited. Host sites should also be aware that if they offer the member employment in place of their service, they will not be eligible for a member in the following program years.

Anticipated Timeline

Host Site Fee Due	July 1 st , 2021
VISTA Members Begin	August 2021

At this time, MCAH has not received the official VISTA program award for the upcoming year as the sponsor application process is currently underway. MCAH is moving ahead with project placement and recruitment tentatively, pending the program award.

Application Submission Guidelines

Interested organizations must complete the attached application and submit it electronically to Kelli Beavers, Program Director, at kbeavers@mihomeless.org. Applications are due no later than **Friday, June 18th, 2021**.

Technical Assistance

Questions about the RFP or application can be directed to the program director at 517.853.3897 or kbeavers@mihomeless.org.

**Building Capacity to End Homelessness
AmeriCorps VISTA Project
Site Application**

Organization Name:

Organization Address:

Main Contact Name & Information:

Prospective Site Supervisor Name & Contact Information:

Organizational Need

1. Detail the mission of your organization and provide a brief summary of the services currently provided.

2. Provide a statement of need. Explain why you are requesting an AmeriCorps VISTA member and how the VISTA project would build capacity within your organization.

3. AmeriCorps VISTA is designed as an anti-poverty program. Explain the need for anti-poverty programming in your community.

4. Through the project's indirect, capacity-building service activities, how do you anticipate your project will impact low-income individuals?

Organizational Capacity

5. VISTA members must serve full-time with a minimum of 37.5 hours per week. Does your organization have the capacity, as well as a sufficient amount of service activities, to accomplish this?

Yes No

6. Is the selected site supervisor a full-time employee and located at the same physical site as the proposed VISTA member?

Yes No

7. Will the supervisor attend the required supervisor orientation?

Yes No

8. Share your organization's plan for providing supervision, as well as the experience and qualifications of the site supervisor.

9. Does your organization have the ability to provide dedicated workspace, computer, phone and any other equipment necessary to complete required tasks?

Yes No

10. Does your organization have the ability to provide the host site match fee by the required deadline as well as the monthly housing incentive?

Yes No

11. Can your organization ensure that the expected member activities have not previously been completed by a staff member or volunteer and that they will not include any of the detailed prohibited activities?

Yes No

12. Please explain your anticipated process for recruiting your AmeriCorps VISTA member, including a recruitment timeline and how you will conduct outreach.

13. Members will be expected to complete a period of on-site orientation and may need to utilize external opportunities to be best prepared for their service activities. Is your organization prepared to create a training agenda and provide the necessary support and resources for service activity related training? Explain.

14. AmeriCorps places great value on member experience and professional development. How will you ensure a positive member experience and professional growth?

15. Has your organization hosted AmeriCorps members, from any stream of service, in the past or currently? If so, please describe the member activities and when the service occurred.

Yes No

If yes, provide information:

Member Activities

16. Using the four service categories and activities listed above, which areas will your member participate in? Provide information about the specific activities to be completed for each area.

Community Engagement & Awareness: Yes No

Activities:

Developing, Expanding, and Strengthening Partnerships and Networks: Yes No

Activities:

Financial Resources: Yes No

Activities:

Volunteer Recruitment and Management: Yes No

Activities:

17. The VISTA project is a multi-year project with the intention of increasing capacity consistently throughout the years and to ensure the sustainability of the activities through site staff or volunteers after the project. Selected sites will tentatively be chosen for additional years, contingent on continuation applications, compliance, and member support success. How does your organization anticipate building upon and increasing activities throughout the length of the project? How will your organization ensure sustainability after the project has completed?

18. Estimate the measurable results expected as a result of the VISTA project, including results directly connected to the member service activities (such as resources leveraged, volunteers recruited, etc.) as well as impact experienced by your organization's clients (such as number of individuals housed as a result of the activities and increased capacity). Program performance measurement information can be found in the narrative above.

19. Detail the objectives and proposed activities using the VISTA Assignment Description information and template below:

- Objectives
 - *Articulate what the VISTA will achieve throughout the assignment in order to reach the project's goal*
 - *Include multiple objectives that link the overall project goal and the member activities*
 - *Use action verbs*
 - *Include specific performance periods (such as, first through third months)*
- Member Activities
 - *Identify specific activities the VISTA will carry out to achieve the objectives*
 - *Activities that include the desired outcome or deliverable are the most informative and effective*
 - *Use active verbs*
 - *Avoid vague statements such as "will assist with..."*
 - *Should be specific enough that someone unfamiliar with the project can understand expectations of the VISTA*

VISTA Assignment Description

Objective of the Assignment (mm/dd/yyyy – mm/dd/yyyy)
(Insert first objective)

Member Activities:

1. (Insert first activity that will contribute to accomplishing the first objective).
 - a. (Insert smaller element that's part of the first activity, if applicable)
2. (Insert activity two)
- 3.

Objective of the Assignment (mm/dd/yyyy – mm/dd/yyyy)
(Insert second objective)

Member Activities:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Objective of the Assignment (mm/dd/yyyy – mm/dd/yyyy)
(Insert third objective) (optional)

Member Activities

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Insert Additional Objectives as Needed (optional)