



**HOMELESS & HOUSING
COALITION OF KENTUCKY**



AmeriCorps

**Homes for All AmeriCorps
New VISTA Project Application Guidance
2023-2024**

Table of Contents

Overview of AmeriCorps VISTA.....	3
What is AmeriCorps VISTA?	3
What is Homes for All AmeriCorps?.....	3
Who Can Host a VISTA?	3
What can a VISTA do?	4
Restricted VISTA Activities:	4
Overview of Hosting a Homes for All VISTA Member	4
Who are VISTA members?	4
VISTA Terminology	4
VISTA Member Recommendation and Enrollment Process	5
Available VISTA Start Dates.....	5
Project Site Contribution.....	5
New Project Application Guidance	6
Selection Process	6
Application Timeline	6
Technical Assistance	6
Submitting the Application	6

Overview of AmeriCorps VISTA

What is AmeriCorps VISTA?

VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) is a national service program focused social justice and economic equity. Conceived by President Kennedy as a domestic counterpart to the Peace Corps, VISTA was started by President Johnson in 1965 as part of the War on Poverty. VISTA joined the AmeriCorps umbrella in 1993. The core principles of VISTA include community empowerment, capacity-building, and sustainable solutions. Any nonprofit organization, educational institution, or tribal or public agency that has a program explicitly designed to alleviate poverty may apply to become a VISTA project sponsor. **The project's goal should address helping to bring individuals and communities out of poverty, rather than on making poverty more tolerable.** The project should strengthen long-term solutions, not merely provide short-term services. VISTA projects are generally a 3-year partnership. Organizations should develop a long-term sustainability plan in year one of the project's existence, demonstrating the eventual phase-out of the VISTA resource.

What is Homes for All AmeriCorps?

Homes for All AmeriCorps encompasses two national service programs – AmeriCorps direct service and AmeriCorps VISTA. We have facilitated VISTA projects across the Commonwealth since 2016. We are funded through the federal AmeriCorps agency.

Our project sites serve those who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness, housing insecure, or in search of affordable homeownership opportunities. We also work with sites that serve individuals with disabilities, survivors of domestic violence, and children. Our primary focus is to address the affordable housing crisis through housing development, repair, and provision of housing and homeless services. The sites we partner with will also provide services to children, individuals seeking substance abuse treatment, mental health services, healthcare, education, food security, and employment. These are supports considered essential to maintaining housing.

Who Can Host a VISTA?

Any nonprofit organization, educational institution, or tribal or public agency that has a program explicitly designed to alleviate poverty may apply to become a VISTA project sponsor with HHCK. Priority will be given to sites with proposals that align with our program goals and the demonstrated capacity to host a VISTA. Submitting a VISTA application does not guarantee a VISTA placement.

Placement sites are eligible to apply for a VISTA member to serve with their organization, in the same position, for up to three years. Each year is meant to build upon the previous year and focus on building sustainability for the program. Continuation sites that are proposing Year 4 (or more) of their VISTA project will be considered on a case-by-case basis and must address a significant community need or the organization can submit a proposal for a new VISTA project.

Standard VISTA Project Timeline

- Year 1 – VISTA member establishes and creates a program or project and begins to create structure for sustainability
- Year 2 – VISTA member continues to implement project and continues to create structure for sustainability
- Year 3 – VISTA member focuses on making the project sustainable
- Year 4 – proposals will be considered on a case-by-case basis and must address a significant community need or new project focus

What can a VISTA do?

A VISTA member is focused on capacity building with sustainable solutions. Activities focus on building the organizational, administration, and financial capacity of organizations to provide better direct services that fight poverty. Projects must work to break the cycle of poverty by addressing critical community needs. VISTA members must be placed in a capacity-building role for the entire term of service.

VISTAs are not employees or designed to fill in gaps in staffing needs. Activities cannot duplicate routine functions of staff or displace paid employees. VISTAs are national service members focusing on accomplishing a specific project/need.

Examples of VISTA activities include building sustainable partnerships with local organizations and businesses, recruiting/training/coordinating volunteers, and grant writing.

Please visit [VISTA Campus](#) for more information on VISTA.

Restricted VISTA Activities:

Displacement of Employed Workers: 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.

Administrative Duties: Unless needed for specific VISTA service activities, the project may not include administrative duties that support general organizational goals such as clerical responsibilities, answering phones, or data entry. If needed, the general duties should be very limited. For example: a VISTA can create a database for data entry and test it by doing some limited data entry but once created and established, the activity is then turned over to staff person to finish the data entry and maintain.

Direct Service: Projects cannot be direct service such as helping clients directly through housing counseling, case management, etc.

Overview of Hosting a Homes for All VISTA Member

Hosting a VISTA member(s) is a collaborative effort between project sites and HHCK. Project sites that host a VISTA member through Homes for All are responsible, in tandem with HHCK, for recruiting, training, and supervising a VISTA member for 12 months.

Who are VISTA members?

VISTAs must be at least 18 years old, a U.S. citizen or legal permanent resident, able to pass a national service criminal history check, and meet the knowledge, skills, and requirements set by Homes for All and the project site. The benefits of VISTA service include a modest living allowance, a choice of an education award or end of service stipend upon successful completion of service, health care benefits, relocation allowance (if eligible), childcare assistance (if eligible), one year non-compete eligibility following service for government employment, student loan deferment on eligible student loans, and repayment of interest accrued on qualified student loans.

VISTA Terminology

This is a list of common terms you'll find throughout the application:

(VISTA) Slot = this is what you are applying for and is the opportunity to have a VISTA member(s) through Homes for All. You are applying for an open position/slot, rather than a specific individual. You will still need to recruit, interview, and select an individual. Our program staff assists in that process.

VISTA Member = the individual selected and cleared for service.

Project sites = your organization and where your member(s) will serve their term.

VAD (VISTA Assignment Description) = this is the foundation on which the entire VISTA member experience is built, from recruitment to the end of service. The VAD is used to manage, support, and evaluate VISTAs. The VAD details the goals and objectives of your VISTA project.

On-Site Orientation and Training (OSOT) = your organization’s plan for introducing, orienting, and training the VISTA candidate. Your proposal is sent to Homes for All staff for review as part of the application.

Site Supervisor = an employee of your organization who will be responsible for the day-to-day supervision and mentoring of the VISTA member(s).

Virtual Member Orientation (VMO) = each first-time VISTA candidate participates in a **Virtual Member Orientation**, which is candidate-focused, with an emphasis on the individual completing all coursework before activation as a VISTA is complete. Service technically begins the same day as VMO and on-site at the organization, but candidates must meet all requirements to continue service.

VISTA Member Recommendation and Enrollment Process

The process to recruit and enroll a member includes many steps. Homes for All will work cooperatively with sites to select a candidate, but it is ultimately up to AmeriCorps to approve the candidate to begin service.

- Recruitment begins immediately after award notification: our staff support in these efforts
- Project sites conduct interviews with applicants; our staff support in these efforts
- A candidate is recommended by the project site and approved by our staff after an interview
- Our staff helps the recommended candidate move through the onboarding process
- Candidate accepts conditional position offer in MyAmeriCorps.gov
- Our staff submits all hiring and nomination materials to AmeriCorps
- AmeriCorps notifies our staff when candidates have been enrolled
- Once enrolled, incoming members have to complete paperwork and background checks to successfully start their service by the assigned date

There are only so many VISTA start date slots available across the US. The earlier you can nominate a candidate to Homes for All, the better – this allows for Homes for All to submit all recommendation materials to AmeriCorps well ahead of the deadline.

Available VISTA Start Dates

The only cycle of VISTA enrollment for the Homes for All VISTA program during this program year will be in July and August of 2023. If a candidate is not found in time for the start dates below, your organization will not be able to fill a position until the next enrollment period (summer 2024)

July 17th

July 31st

August 14th

You can request a VISTA start date when you submit your application. We will do our best to accommodate your requested start date.

Project Site Contribution

Host sites are required to provide a financial contribution for each slot awarded to participate in the program. The total is \$6,000 per slot per program year. This is the program participation cost, not the cost of the VISTA member, their benefits, or their living allowance. This contribution is non-refundable (even in the event of a VISTA resigning or being terminated).

Sites must also set aside fund to reimburse members for local, project-related travel costs.

Each agency awarded a Homes for All VISTA through HHCK must also become a paying member organization of HHCK.

New Project Application Guidance

Organizations interested in partnering with Homes for All to host a VISTA member should carefully review the requirements and complete their application by **Friday, April 21st**. Any application submitted without meeting the deadline and without all required application items and current narratives will be considered nonresponsive and will not be reviewed. Applications may be considered on a rolling basis.

Selection Process:

Host site selection is based on the proposal’s alignment with Homes for All goals and institutional capacity to host a VISTA, as well as the ability to meet the evaluation criteria provided below. Applying does not guarantee a VISTA placement.

Application Design

1. Application Checklist
2. Narratives (55%)
3. Performance Measures (15%)
4. VISTA Assignment Description (VAD) (15%)
5. On-Site Orientation + Training (OSOT) (15%)
6. Signature Page

Priority will also be given to host sites:

- Who aren’t currently hosting a VISTA member through another project
- That clearly articulate potential for significant community impact through the program
- Located in geographic areas not currently well served by another VISTA program
- Proposing projects entering Year(s) 1-3
- Submitting a complete application with all elements of the application design in the requested format

Application Timeline

Application Released	March 20 th
Application Due	April 21 st
Projects Awarded	May 10 th

Technical Assistance

After project sites have been selected, a Site Supervisor training will be conducted in summer 2023 to prepare sites for the upcoming program year. The selected project site agrees to make every reasonable accommodation to allow the site supervisor to participate in this event. If the designated site supervisor is unavailable, another representative from the organization must attend.

Submitting the Application

Complete the New VISTA Project Application PDF document and send via email to application@hhck.org using the subject line “VISTA Project Application – organization name”.

Any questions related to the application should be directed to [Caitlin Bottoms](#), AmeriCorps Program Director.