Lake Effect Leaders

An AmeriCorps VISTA project

2020-2021 Concept Application Word Document

Applications are due Monday, Dec. 7, 2020

Submit the application via email to Ben Helkowski at bhelkowski@allegheny.edu

Contact Gabrielle Bradshaw by email or phone (814-332-5318) with any questions

Lake Effect Leaders (LEL) provides opportunities for government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and schools located in Erie and Crawford counties to receive a full-time AmeriCorps VISTA member to help their agency build capacity and eliminate poverty. Each individual VISTA project at an organizational host site typically lasts three years or more.

Lake Effect Leaders VISTA members are primarily supported by Lake Effect Leaders Project and federally supported by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). Founded in 1965, Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) is a federal anti-poverty program designed to provide needed resources to nonprofit organizations and public agencies to increase their capacity to lift communities out of poverty.

The Concept Application for organizations interested in hosting a 2020-2021 VISTA member is due December 7th, 2020. LEL is committed to working with applicants in order to create the best VISTA projects possible. If you have questions, please contact Ben Helkowski, LEL VISTA Project Director, at bhelkowski@allegheny.edu, or at 814-332-5318.

Note: For continuing assignments (years 2, 3, etc.) please specify any changes to your project under **#21 - VISTA Assignment.** In addition, please provide updated data and information in both the **Need** and **Strengthening Communities** section of the application **(#18 & #19).**

VISTA Project Applicant Info

1. **Organization's Name:**

2. **Organization's Contact Name (First and Last):**

3. **Organization's Address including ZIP (5 digit) + 4-digit extension:**

4. **Organization's Telephone Number:**

5. **Organization's Contact Email:**

6. **Organization's Website:**

7. Identify type of organization:
- ☐ 501(c) (3)
- ☐ 501(c)
- ☐ School
- ☐ Government Entity

8. Organization's EIN #:

9. Organization's Mission:

10. For continuing projects, please select project year status for 2020-2021:
- ☐ Project Year 2
- ☐ Project Year 3

11. For new projects, indicate how many years of VISTA Support you expect the project to need:
- ☐ 1 year
- ☐ 2 years
- ☐ 3 years

12. Please identify <u>ONE Focus Area</u> for the VISTA Project:

The Corporation for National and Community service will support new and continuing projects that address one of the following focus areas in FY 20-21. **Please select one checkbox.** For more information, please review CNCS Programming Guidance.

☐ **Economic Opportunity:** AmeriCorps VISTA's commitment to ending poverty requires focusing on project sponsors that provide opportunities to low-income individuals to get workforce training, education, and skills that will meet the needs of employers. In addition, projects that focus on housing are strongly encouraged to apply.

☐ **Healthy Futures:** The VISTA program will give priority to projects that meet health needs for economically disadvantaged individuals.

☐ **Education:** The VISTA program will support projects that enhance access to services and resources that contribute to improved educational outcomes for economically disadvantaged children. AmeriCorps VISTA will target new project development in communities with large concentrations of low-income students (e.g., Title I schools).

☐ **Veterans and Military Families:** AmeriCorps VISTA will support projects that focus on low-income veterans and military families as beneficiaries.

13. **For projects focused on Economic Opportunity, please choose _one priority area:_**

Choose One

☐**Housing:** Transitioning individuals into or helping them remain in safe, affordable housing, with a special focus on veterans. Organizations focused on eviction prevention are encouraged to apply.

☐**Employment/Workforce Development:** Improving or creating job skills training programs that lead to increased employment, particularly career and technical education (CTE) programs.

☐**Bridging the Digital Divide:** Improving access to computers and high-speed internet as well as the skills to effectively use this technology, particularly for underserved rural and tribal areas.

14. **For projects focused on Healthy Futures, please choose _one priority area:_**

Choose One

☐**Access to Health Care:** Connecting economically disadvantaged individuals, particularly youth, to preventative education and treatment/recovery services in regards to the opioid crisis, and mental health services.

☐**Food Security:** Alleviating hunger and increasing access to nutritious food.

☐**Opioid Addiction Prevention and Recovery:** Connecting low-income communities to opioid prevention, intervention/treatment, and recovery efforts.

15. **For projects focused on Education, please choose _one priority area_:**

Choose One

☐**School readiness** for economically disadvantaged children.

☐**K-12 success** in student educational and behavioral outcomes in low-achieving schools.

☐**Career and Technical Education (CTE)** to help students gain the skills they need to compete for employment.

☐**College access and success** for low-income students.

☐**STEM** (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) programs as pathways for economically disadvantaged students.

16. **For projects focused on Veterans and Military Families, please choose _one priority area:_**

Choose One

☐**Economic opportunity:** Employment and veterans' homelessness prevention/reduction.

☐**Education:** School readiness, success in K-12 education, career and technical education (CTE) and post-secondary employment success.

☐**Healthy Futures:** Opioid prevention, intervention, and recovery.

17. **Please indicate whether your project will serve priority populations and regions:**

☐Serving populations in rural communities

☐Serving Native American populations

☐Serving in areas of concentrated poverty (Use the USDA Concentrated poverty mapping tool)

18. **Need Statement:** In this section, please describe the unmet poverty-related community need(s) you propose to address using AmeriCorps VISTA resources. Clearly describe the poverty-related need and the local beneficiary community, as well as how the planned program strategy (i.e., intervention)[1] will lead to the final planned outcomes for the beneficiary community. Your narrative must include:

1. The community you plan to serve using data that are current, objective, and specific to the community. These data should substantiate the need(s) you aim to address. Cite the data source(s).
2. The specific low-income population your project intends to serve.
3. Why the needs are not being met now.
4. How your proposed project relates to the programming priorities outlined in the [AmeriCorps VISTA Program Guidance](#) of the current fiscal year. If your proposed project does not align with the current VISTA programming priorities, justify why the project should be considered.
5. A summary of how your project will ultimately strengthen the community and bring individuals out of poverty. This should include a description of how the planned program strategy (i.e., intervention) will address the poverty-related need and will lead to the final planned anti-poverty outcomes. Include any evidence that suggests your approach will be successful. Evidence could include past performance, results from credible research, or results from a similar, successful program. Evidence would provide the basis for decisions about the design, frequency, and intensity of the proposed intervention.

Example: *An applicant proposes to engage VISTAs to create a volunteer recruitment and management system in which recruited community volunteers will tutor third-grade students in an impoverished area in a low-performing school for an hour a day, three days per week. The applicant believes that as a result of the tutoring, the students' academic performance will improve. To support this programming approach, the applicant would describe any evidence (e.g., an independent study from a university) that the intervention (a certain set of tutoring activities delivered to a specific target population by community volunteers for one hour, three times per week) will result in improved academic performance.*

19. **Strengthening Communities:** In this section, describe how your VISTA project aims to complement or expand current efforts in the community to address the need(s) described. Your response should encompass the following:

1. A description of how the project will be designed to build long-term sustainability in an organization or program to ensure it continues after VISTA resources end.
2. How VISTAs would be used, and how many VISTAs you are requesting.
3. A discussion of how this approach will change over time as the VISTA(s) implements the project and build capacity.

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[1] An intervention is the action or activities intended to address some problems of our low income communities. The Need and Strengthening Communities sections of the Project Application convey most of the intervention information.

20. **Goal Statement:** VISTA projects build capacity for government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and schools over a three-year timeline in order to create long-term sustainable solutions to poverty. VISTA projects cannot replace existing or vacant staff positions. Below, please provide a brief description of your VISTA assignment **project goal.** Project goals should include how VISTAs will address poverty, what populations will be served, how VISTA activities will build capacity, and the specific result of the VISTA effort.

Example: *To help ensure that children of incarcerated parents receive the educational, social, and emotional support they need to help them break the cycle of poverty, the MentorCorps VISTA project will build the capacity of WCS by developing a sustainable volunteer recruitment and management system for its mentoring program.*

21. **VISTA Assignment:** Using the checkboxes below, please outline the key activities that the full-time VISTA(s) and Leader(s) will perform to implement the proposed project. VISTA members and Leaders serve for an entire year; therefore, the activities should be sufficient to enable a member to fulfill a one-year, full-time commitment. Approved projects use VISTA Assignment information as the basis for the VISTA Assignment Description created during the recruitment process.

Choose all that apply
- ☐Community Assessment: Environmental scan of community context and need
- ☐Community awareness and engagement: Expand community knowledge and support of the program effort
- ☐Expand/strengthen partnerships/networks: Initiative efforts with other organizations, for example, through applying jointly for funding, collaborating on programming or referrals, sharing staff and resources, developing training and materials that are shared
- ☐Financial resources: Develop/expand a diversified funding stream
- ☐Material development: Improvement or expansion of materials that support programming (i.e. toolkits, curricula, worksheets)
- ☐Outreach: Participant recruitment
- ☐Performance measurement: Assessing results of program offerings
- ☐Program development and delivery: Improvement or expansion
- ☐Technology use: Develop systems for organizational effectiveness
- ☐Volunteer recruitment and management system: Establish or expand pool of volunteers to assist with service delivery
- ☐Other:
If other, please explain:
For projects in year 2 or 3, please comment on any assignment changes here:

22. **For current VISTA host sites, please provide a summary of VISTA member project accomplishments to date:**

23. **I understand that by hosting a VISTA member the organization agrees to: (please check to indicate agreement)**

☐ Contribute $4,500 to support project administration and member development

☐ Provide Lake Effect Leaders with in-kind support with a monetary value of at least $1,000

☐ Reimburse VISTA members for on-the-job transportation expenses

☐ Provide VISTA members with resources to perform their tasks, i.e. adequate workspace, computer, telephone, consumable supplies, etc.

☐ Provide VISTA members with weekly supervision and support

☐ Offer a VISTA position with your organization regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, or disability

☐ Submit weekly logs and progress reports in a timely manner

☐ Sign a Memorandum of Agreement with Allegheny College/Lake Effect Leaders

☐ Cover costs of clearances, tests, vaccines, etc., if required by the organization

☐ Ensure VISTA members are working on appropriate assignments that build capacity within the organization, as outlined in the member's VISTA Assignment

☐ Support VISTA members' participation in project activities such as trainings, service days, and professional development opportunities facilitated by both LEL and community partners

☐ Communicate with Project Director if concerns arise during the term of service

24. **Upload an In-kind Support Budget (see additional document)**