

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 Corporation for National and Community Service

VISTA Program Recovery Plan

Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA)

The mission of the AmeriCorps VISTA program to create and expand programs that bring low-income individuals and communities out of poverty is strongly aligned with Administration and Congressional priorities in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Recovery Act). Existing VISTA projects already support job creation, the abatement of home foreclosures, credit counseling and financial asset development programs. Corporation state office staff allocate VISTA resources based upon the critical needs of their state.

Funding

Operating Expenses, Recovery Act Volunteers in Service to America: \$65,000,000
Wyoming Total: \$21,000 (for VISTA Recovery Support Grant)

Objectives

AmeriCorps VISTA is the national service program designed to fight poverty and build economic opportunity. VISTA engages individuals 18 years and older in a year of fulltime service in our nation's poorest urban and rural areas, working to build the organizational, administrative and financial capacity of programs that help pull and keep Americans out of poverty.

VISTA members are assigned to community organizations (e.g. non-profit, faith-based) and public agencies to help the organizations build on locally-driven solutions to both the causes of poverty as well as the problems that arise in poverty-stricken communities. The specific objectives of the VISTA program, as outlined in the Domestic Volunteer Service Act, are:

- To strengthen local agencies and organizations to carry out their programs;
- To encourage volunteer service at the local level; and
- To generate the commitment of private sector resources.

With additional funding from the Recovery Act, the VISTA program will recruit up to an additional 3,000 full time VISTA members to fulfill the related goals of the Act and the VISTA program. In addition, cash grants may be made to a selected organization to offset the costs incurred by providing the necessary supervision, training and/or on-the job transportation support to VISTA members.

Activities

VISTA members funded through the Recovery Act will augment the ongoing work of the program through activities such as fundraising, establishment of volunteer recruitment and management systems, community outreach and partnership development. These activities will help non-profit and other community organizations to build greater capacity and to be a sustainable local resource to their communities as they work to increase economic opportunity for Americans living in poverty or who are in danger of falling into poverty.

ServeWyoming has already applied for and received a \$21,000 VISTA Recovery Support Grant. This grant awards 12 months of funding for the 7/1/09 – 6/30/10 budget period. These funds have been awarded to offset the costs incurred by providing the necessary supervision, training and/or on-the job transportation support to VISTA members in our state. With the additional funding from the Recovery Act, Wyoming is at an all time high in recruitment of VISTA positions. In fact, ServeWyoming has just recently increased the number of VISTAs under our sponsorship from 3 to 13 which is why these additional funds are so needed. Statewide there is the potential for an additional 20 VISTA members provided through recovery funds.

Characteristics

The VISTA program does not typically support projects through cash grant awards. Instead, a non-profit organization or public agency signs a Memorandum of Agreement with the VISTA program to sponsor a specific number of full-time VISTA members. In this way, the funding to support VISTA members is administered directly by the Corporation, rather than by the selected organizations. Organizations that sponsor VISTA members are required to submit a detailed application outlining their overall program, including a work plan and annual performance outputs and outcomes. Project sponsors are required to report quarterly on their progress in achieving these performance goals.

In some cases, the VISTA program can provide a cash grant to a selected organization to offset the costs incurred by providing the necessary supervision, training and/or on-the job transportation support to VISTA members. This is the VISTA Recovery Support Grant received by ServeWyoming.

Measurement and Evaluation

All VISTA projects currently provide annual performance data identified by the Corporation for national reporting purposes. These performance data are reported by the sponsoring organizations through the Corporation's eGrants database. Performance metrics reflect the objectives of the VISTA program and include data on the number of community volunteers recruited and the amount of private sector resources raised as a result of VISTA member activities.

The VISTA program will require projects receiving support through the Recovery Act to report separately the impact of the supplemental VISTA members funded through the Recovery Act on a quarterly basis. Because VISTA members do not perform direct service, but instead work collectively to build organizational capacity, performance measures will be tied to project accomplishments, rather than accomplishments by individual VISTA members. The VISTA program is currently reviewing its existing measures to identify additional outputs and outcomes specific to Recovery Act activities.

Performance data related to Recovery Act activities will be made available to the public on the Corporation's website www.nationalservice.gov and on www.Recovery.gov.

Additional guidance that ServeWyoming must adhere to can be found at:
http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/09_0313_recovery_vista_guidance.pdf