



**A GUIDE TO THE
AMERICORPS VISTA PROGRAM
FOR
LEGAL SERVICES ORGANIZATIONS**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	3
A.	What Is AmeriCorps VISTA?	3
B.	What Can VISTAs Do?	4
II.	VISTA & LEGAL SERVICES	5
A.	Examples of Legal Services VISTA Projects.....	5
B.	Additional Benefits of Sponsoring VISTAs	7
III.	NEXT STEPS: The VISTA Process from Start to Finish.....	8
A.	Making Sure the VISTA Program is Right for Your Organization	8
B.	A Step-By-Step Guide to the VISTA Process	9
IV.	HELPFUL LINKS & RESOURCES.....	15
V.	APPENDIX.....	16

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I. INTRODUCTION

For over forty-seven years the federal VISTA program has been a vital resource in the fight against poverty in the United States. This guide is designed to (1) introduce the VISTA program to legal services organizations that are not familiar with it; (2) demonstrate how the VISTA program can work effectively in the context of legal services; (3) provide additional resources for organizations that are interested in sponsoring a VISTA project at their site. The material in this guide is adapted from various AmeriCorps publications¹ and interviews with legal services organizations that have previously sponsored VISTAs.

A. What Is AmeriCorps VISTA?

AmeriCorps VISTA is the national service program designed to fight poverty. Established as Volunteers in Service to America in 1965, VISTA was incorporated into the AmeriCorps network of programs in 1993. The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) manages all AmeriCorps programs. Any public, private, or faith-based nonprofit organization, educational institution, or public agency may sponsor a VISTA. Sponsors develop a VISTA project and submit their proposal to their state CNCS office for approval. The VISTA program is guided by four core principles:



- Anti-Poverty: VISTA supports community efforts to overcome poverty.
 - *A VISTA project is explicitly designed to help bring individuals and communities out of poverty, not make poverty more tolerable. A VISTA project emphasizes long-term solutions instead of short-term services.*
- Community Empowerment: VISTA believes in listening to low-income individuals to develop projects that are responsive and relevant to their needs.
 - *A VISTA project involves members of the target community in planning and implementation, and leverages community strengths and resources.*
- Capacity Building: VISTA expands the ability of sponsor organizations to fight poverty by building infrastructure, expanding partnerships, securing resources, coordinating training, and more.
 - ***VISTAs do not provide direct services***
- Sustainable Solutions: VISTAs serve as a short-term resource to help create long-term solutions. VISTAs build the capacity of the organization and community so that they can implement the project on their own (via staff, volunteers, or other community members).
 - *A VISTA project has a long-term sustainability plan that demonstrates the eventual phase-out of VISTAs as a resource.*

¹ See CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL & COMMUNITY SERVICE, IS AMERICORPS VISTA RIGHT FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION? A GUIDE TO BECOMING AN AMERICORPS VISTA PROJECT SPONSOR, available at http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/10_0902_vista_supervisors_manual.pdf; CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL & COMMUNITY SERVICE, VISTA: OVERCOMING POVERTY, BUILDING CAPACITY, available at http://www.americorps.gov/pdf/08_1210_ac_vista_report.pdf; "AmeriCorps VISTA – For Organizations," http://www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/overview/index.asp.

B. What Can VISTAs Do?

VISTAs do not provide direct services, and VISTAs' duties should not replace or supplant those of paid staff, contractors or existing volunteers. However, VISTAs *can* perform a wide range of activities that amplify the sponsor's organizational capacity.²

Acceptable Service	Capacity Building	Sustainable Activities
Recruit volunteers	Develop forms, volunteer assignments	Develop volunteer handbook
Train direct service providers	Write training or train-the-trainer curriculum	Develop training manual
Coordinate projects	Develop procedures and systems	Develop volunteer management system and procedural guide
Public speaking	Develop speakers' bureau	Develop community partnerships
Write press releases	Develop press kits, media database	Secure media partners
Organize fundraising events	Grant writing, tracking and prospecting; develop database	Secure project staffing
Organize task forces/coalitions	Develop leadership structure of taskforce/coalition	Create infrastructure
Conduct outreach	Design brochures, posters	Create mechanism for project evaluation

² Table is from IS AMERICORPS VISTA RIGHT FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION?, *supra* note 1, at 9.

II. VISTA & LEGAL SERVICES

What VISTAs Can Do for *Your* Organization

The ability of low-income individuals to obtain legal representation, navigate the legal system, and understand and safeguard their rights can be vital to achieving economic self-sufficiency. With this in mind, legal services providers have creatively and effectively utilized VISTAs to launch, strengthen, or expand programs that increase access to justice for indigent individuals. This section first provides examples of specific VISTA projects implemented by legal services organizations, and then discusses some additional, long-term benefits that can come from a thoughtfully executed VISTA project.

A. Examples of Legal Services VISTA Projects

Many legal services organizations have already utilized VISTAs in a wide variety of projects that meet the priorities and requirements of the VISTA program *and* the needs of legal services providers and their clients. As demonstrated below, while VISTAs cannot represent clients themselves, through conducting common duties like volunteer recruitment, developing new technology or resources, conducting outreach, building partnerships, and fundraising, VISTAs can ultimately expand an organization's ability to provide the community with legal services or information.

- **Volunteer Recruitment**

VISTAs can recruit volunteer attorneys, law students, and/or non-legal volunteers (e.g., interpreters, translators, tax preparers, tutors, or mentors) to assist your clients.

Council on Crime and Justice (Minnesota): VISTA recruited *pro bono* attorneys to assist indigent petitioners with criminal record expungements.

Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago: VISTAs recruited, coordinated, trained and supported volunteer attorneys and interpreters for various projects, including: a community legal aid clinic; a program to assist immigrant victims of domestic violence apply for U.S. citizenship under the Violence Against Women Act; and legal hotline for people who have been denied public benefits. In one two-year period the VISTAs at LAF recruited almost 250 volunteer attorneys who contributed 10,000 hours of legal services annually and served more than 1,100 clients.

Mid-Minnesota Legal Assistance: VISTA recruits urban law students to volunteer at one-day clinics in underserved rural areas, after receiving training from their law school faculty.

Montana Legal Services Association: In the past year VISTAs recruited and trained 2,039 volunteers who provided 58,524 hours of service in various projects across the state.

As much as people are told that VISTA is a capacity building program and not a direct service program or a way to replace existing staff, our first instinct and hope is to hire someone who can represent clients and take cases off the waitlist. The challenge is to design a position that can alleviate that need, which is why the VISTA attorney pro bono program coordinator position has been successful for us. It allowed us to build a pro bono program that has resulted in hundreds of cases being placed with pro bono attorneys—cases that would have gone unrepresented, or at best filled up the waiting list because we were at capacity.

— Sheila Stuhlman,
Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota

- **Developing New Technology or Resources**

VISTAs can develop resources such as: databases or other mechanisms for grant management or volunteer tracking; public relations materials or websites to raise your organization's public profile; "Know Your Rights" pamphlets or training modules; referral directory of local service providers; automated legal forms; and websites, helpdesks or kiosks with legal information. Many bi- and multi-lingual VISTAs have developed non-English resources and presentations.

Brattleboro Community Justice Center (Vermont): VISTAs created a database to track volunteer activity.

Council on Crime and Justice: VISTAs worked with other legal services organizations to create an automated document program for expungements and an online compendium of collateral sanctions in Minnesota.

Minnesota Legal Services: VISTAs updated and enhanced a statewide legal help website, LawHelpMN.org, leading usage to triple; VISTAs added hundreds of additional resources to the site, including a "LiveHelp" chat navigational assistance tool, and created versions of the site in Somali and Spanish. VISTAs also created document assembly court form interviews for pro se litigants.

Montana Legal Services State Support: VISTAs helped develop: one of the first legal services informational websites, MontanaLawHelp.org; another website with free tax information; self-help law kiosks in remote or rural areas with "LiveHelp" chat navigational assistance; the B-SAFE program, an Individual Development Account program for domestic violence survivors to promote financial literacy and economic independence.

Prairie State Legal Services: VISTAs created a mortgage foreclosure helpdesk at an Illinois county courthouse that has provided legal information to more than 1,500 people.

- **Conduct research or outreach**

VISTAs can conduct studies or surveys on an issue or need in your community, or to ascertain client satisfaction with your organization's services. VISTAs can conduct outreach to potential clients or community partners to raise awareness of your organization's work.

Brattleboro Community Justice Center (Vermont): VISTAs organized a ten-session movie series addressing prison issues; coordinated a large community event involving a local youth theater and an eight-performance production that highlighted restorative justice themes; engaged the deaf community and conducted outreach to minority populations.

Council on Crime and Justice: VISTAs worked extensively with local employers to encourage adoption of fair hiring practices for individuals with criminal records, public defenders to better understand the full impact of plea agreements, and social service agencies in Minnesota to demystify the expungement process.

Mid-Minnesota Legal Assistance: VISTA interviewed local service providers about language access, and shared language access information with the immigrant community.

Montana Legal Services Association: VISTA conducted a legal needs survey in Montana.

Watsonville Law Center (California): VISTAs completed a Housing Counseling and Education Feasibility Study for the county; held numerous community forums for service providers and residents related to various issues affecting the community.

- **Build or expand networks & partnerships**

VISTAs can network or develop partnerships with hospitals, schools, public agencies, or other service providers. Some partners may also be willing to pay your organization's cost-share contribution (see page 8 to learn more about cost-share), and/or fund the VISTA project after its completion.

Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance Foundation: VISTAs launched and coordinate: a foreclosure mediation program, which now partners with St. Louis University Legal Clinic; a medical-legal partnership with local hospitals; an education advocacy project that works closely with children, parents, and teachers in the East St. Louis school system to empower parents and improve children's educational outcomes.

Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago: VISTAs helped start a medical-legal partnership at the University of Chicago's children's hospitals and clinics. The program continues today without any VISTA funding, and two former VISTAs eventually worked on the project as staff attorneys.

Prairie State Legal Services: VISTA helps establish collaborative medical-legal partnerships between PSLS and medical clinics serving low-income individuals.

Watsonville Law Center (California): VISTAs developed, maintained, or strengthened: a tricity foreclosure collaborative that holds regular workshops and develops expert resources on foreclosure; a service provider collaborative that meets monthly and addresses emerging community issues, like providing services to reentering ex-offenders and the LGBT or indigenous communities; a statewide collaborative of state agencies and other stakeholders in the workers compensation system to address barriers that prevent low-wage and immigrant workers from accessing medical treatment and benefits.

- **Fundraising & Grant writing**

VISTAs write grants, organize fundraisers, and solicit donations for your organization.

Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota: VISTAs assisted with grant writing and prospecting, in addition to giving educational presentations or coordinating volunteers, which led to the addition of an Education Coordinator staff position.

These are just a few examples of legal-oriented VISTA projects. Organizations are always thinking of new and innovative ways to utilize VISTAs.

B. Additional Benefits of Sponsoring VISTAs

Besides helping your organization meet immediate needs in your community, strategically executed VISTA sponsorship can have residual, long-term benefits. Sponsors that approach the program with a "big picture" vision can reap rewards beyond the scope of any specific VISTA project.

- **Sowing the Seeds for Future Funding & Staffing**

VISTAs are a finite financial resource for the sponsoring organization, and a VISTA project must have a plan for its long-term sustainability. However, a VISTA project can lay the groundwork for the organization to later acquire additional fully funded staff. VISTAs can launch, improve, or build upon projects with an eye towards making them more attractive to other funders and grantors; once a project is established and has demonstrated a proven benefit to the

community, funders or other partners may be more enthusiastic about maintaining it. For example, when Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance Foundation formed a medical-legal partnership, the medical partner donated the cost-share for the VISTA. Later, the project was taken over by an Equal Justice Works legal fellow; once the two year fellowship expires, the goal is for the partners to become so invested in the MLP they will fund a permanent staff attorney to manage the program. VISTAs can also raise the funds or write the grants to sustain their project—or even pay their future salary, as many organizations later hire their former VISTAs as regular staff.

- **Energizing Existing Projects & Staff**

Many sponsors report that the enthusiasm of their VISTAs energized their entire organization.

- **Building Community**

VISTAs can expand and strengthen your organization's contacts, networks, and partnerships with other service providers and stakeholders in your area. Even when building partnerships is not an explicit project goal, VISTAs are often connected to a wide network of other members in organizations and agencies across the state.

- **Inspiring Future Leaders**

Many VISTAs begin their year of service relatively early in their career. This gives sponsoring organizations the opportunity to mentor and train individuals at a crucial point in their professional lives. A positive experience can instill VISTAs with a lifelong appreciation for the importance of providing legal aid and the value of community service. Many organizations report that their VISTAs go on to attend law school or otherwise pursue public interest careers.

III. NEXT STEPS: The VISTA Process from Start to Finish

Now that you are familiar with *what* VISTAs can do, this section describes *how* an organization should develop, apply for, and manage a VISTA project.³ The first step is to determine whether or not the VISTA program is a good fit for your particular organization. Then the guide briefly outlines the VISTA process and offers tips from legal services organizations that currently sponsor or have recently sponsored VISTA projects.

A. Making Sure the VISTA Program is Right for Your Organization

The VISTA program can be an invaluable asset for any organization. However, thoughtful preparation is vital to ensure a successful experience for your staff, the VISTAs, your community partners, and the clients you serve. To see if the VISTA program is a good fit for your organization, consider these important questions:

- Does your organization have an **appropriate project** in mind that you would like to launch, expand, or strengthen?
 - Is it specifically related to alleviating poverty?

³ Part III is adapted in large part from IS AMERICORPS VISTA RIGHT FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION?, *supra* note 1.

- What are the long-term goals of the project?
- What population(s) does the project target?
- How will you include the local community in project planning?
- How will you measure the project's impact?
- With what other community groups or organizations will you collaborate?
- What is the project's scope? Could it conceivably become sustainable in roughly three to five years?
- Do you have the requisite **organizational capacity**?
 - Do you have the time and staff to . . .
 - ... develop a VISTA project and draft the application?
 - ... recruit, train, and supervise your VISTA(s)?
 - ... consider multiple VISTAs (some State Commissions require a minimum)?
 - Do you have the office space and equipment to support a VISTA?

How much time do you need? Former VISTA sponsors report:

- With a project in mind, application materials can be completed in 8 hours, with 4-5 days per year total devoted to applications, recruitment, and reporting.
- Launching a brand new project or expanding into an unfamiliar area requires a much more intensive time commitment than simply building upon an existing program.
- Sponsor agencies also participate in quarterly CNCS calls, special days of service on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and September 11th, and a special event during AmeriCorps week. Sponsors report these are excellent outreach opportunities, though they do require time and planning.
- VISTA supervisors spend 6-20% of their total time supervising VISTAs (depending on the complexity of a project, the number of VISTAs at an organization, and the VISTAs' skill levels), with an average of 10% of the supervisor's total time. Supervision is more time-intensive at the beginning of a term and decreases as VISTAs take ownership of the project.

Once you have determined that VISTA is right for your organization, the real work begins!

B. A Step-By-Step Guide to the VISTA Process

This section briefly outlines the steps of a VISTA project from start to finish, with emphasis on the earlier stages that are more relevant for organizations that are just beginning to consider sponsoring a VISTA.

1. *Preparation*

Before you start working through the details of a project proposal, be aware that your VISTA application will need to demonstrate your organization's plan for certain project elements. Begin brainstorming early about how your organization will satisfy these elements.

- Community Involvement: If you are a government agency or less than 51% of your board of directors consists of members of the low-income community, you must demonstrate how the low-income beneficiary community will be involved in the planning and development of the project.
- Supervision: Someone in your organization must supervise the VISTAs (including meeting with the VISTAs one-on-one at least one hour per week).
- Site Location: Your organization must have the space and equipment to support the addition of VISTAs.
- VISTA Support: CNCS will want to know if your organization can assist VISTAs who might relocate by finding affordable housing; if your organization has resources that may make the transition to the VISTA lifestyle easier; and if your organization can offer a VISTA-specific training and orientation necessary for the VISTA's success.
- Recruitment: Your organization must have a plan for recruiting candidates, including how you will effectively use the AmeriCorps online recruitment system.
- Cost-Share: You can increase the number of VISTAs to your organization by becoming a cost share participant organization.

A Note on Cost-Sharing

New VISTA sponsors are *not* required to provide a financial match (though they must be able to direct the project, supervise the members, and provide necessary administrative support to complete the project objectives). Cost-sharing is an option that is encouraged by CNCS—especially in projects wishing to have AmeriCorps VISTA resources for more than three years. A cost-sharing sponsor contributes to the living allowance—often roughly \$10,500—for each VISTA member. Sponsors may ask foundations, state governments, municipalities and school districts, colleges and universities, and/or local corporations to fund the organization's share of the partnership.

While new sponsors do not need to cost-share, after several years CNCS may make additional VISTA funding for returning sponsors contingent on a cost-share contribution.

2. *Application Process*

Applications for VISTA projects are accepted and reviewed throughout the year, although project start-ups generally take place four to five times a year. All project applications are submitted online via eGrants, the CNCS online application and reporting system.

There are extensive resources available to assist you in the application process. The CNCS office in each state will provide technical assistance at any point, and it is **highly recommended that you contact your state CNCS office for guidance**⁴ before completing the concept paper. Also consult Part IV of this guide for additional “Helpful Links & Resources.”

a. Concept Paper

The first step is to submit a concept paper via the eGrants system to the CNCS office in your state. eGrants is a web-based system in which project applications are submitted, assessed, approved or disapproved. Your concept paper must demonstrate that the proposed project: (1) helps people overcome poverty; (2) empowers community members and brings institutionalized enhancement to your organization; and (3) includes outcome-based reporting that measures the actual impact of the project on those being served.

b. Application

If the state office approves your concept paper, you will be invited to submit an application. After the state office receives the application and the required supporting documents, the staff reviews the application and, in most cases, approves or disapproves it within 10 workdays.

c. Final Approval and Memorandum of Agreement

If your project is ultimately approved, your organization will sign a Memorandum of Agreement with CNCS. This legally binding document discusses the federal law, regulations, and policies applicable to VISTA and details the legal obligations of each party and any joint responsibilities.

Keys for Success: Getting Approved

Words matter! VISTAs cannot perform direct service, assume managerial roles, act as administrative support, or perform regular staff functions. To avoid confusion, try not to use verbs such as “work,” “manage,” or “staff.”

Instead, consider verbs such as:

Analyze	Assist	Coordinate	Conduct
Create	Design	Develop	Establish
Evaluate	Expand	Identify	Improve
Organize	Recruit	Research	Review

Priority Alignment – Each year the VISTA program may identify certain priority areas (e.g., veterans or education). Projects that dovetail with these priorities may have a better chance of receiving funding.

Get help – Utilize the expertise and resources available through your state CNCS office early and often.

3. Supervisor Orientation

Once your application receives approval, your organization must designate a VISTA supervisor to learn more about the VISTA program and assume the supervisory role for the new project. All VISTA supervisors must attend a Supervisor’s Orientation at least three months prior to the date their VISTAs begin their term of service. The training also addresses the VISTA Assignment Description (VAD) that you will provide each VISTA, which outlines a VISTA’s assigned project activities and performance goals. Sample VADs are included in the Appendix.

⁴ For a directory of state CNCS offices, visit <http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/contact/stateoffices.asp>.

4. VISTA Recruitment

Next you will be ready to recruit VISTAs for your project. Sponsors post a project description on the CNCS online recruitment portal, and should utilize local and/or national channels such as job fairs, local media, and listervs.

5. VISTA Selection & Approval

Interested applicants will submit an AmeriCorps Member Application, which can be completed online at <https://my.americorps.gov> or obtained through your state CNCS Office. Your organization should interview the most competitive candidates, and then submit the applications of your top choices to the state CNCS office for final approval. The state office makes the final selection decision. The state office will notify you if your recommended candidates are suitable and eligible, and you may then inform the candidates that they have been approved.

6. VISTA Training

At this time, the state office issues a formal invitation to the candidate to participate in Pre-Service Orientation (PSO), a three-to-four day training arranged and conducted by CNCS. To ensure your candidates receive approval in time to attend PSO, follow the training timeline provided by your state office. When a candidate successfully completes PSO, the candidate officially becomes a VISTA and begins his or her term of service. When the VISTA starts at your organization, the VISTA supervisor should provide an On-Site Orientation and Training.

Hiring the Right VISTA for Your Organization

It's better to give up the VISTA than hire a mediocre volunteer. The best VISTAs we've had are risk-takers and adventurers, who have made our projects even better than expected.

— Ann Cofell, Mid-Minnesota Legal Assistance

First, start your recruitment early [e.g., four months in advance]; second, interview carefully; and third, be very realistic with candidates about the VISTA's duties. Do not sugarcoat the work expectations, some of which may not be the most inspiring, creative or challenging.

— Larry Hames, Brattleboro Community Justice Center

When recruiting, it is important to screen to the extent possible for applicants who are committed to service, sufficiently qualified to execute the project, and suitably "matched" with the organization and the supervision style of his or her supervisor.

— Allison Paul, Montana Legal Services Association

I think it's important to find a VISTA who already understands the basic landscape of an issue or community. Beyond that, the year is about exploration and development, so while an experienced attorney may be preferable, it's a great position for a relatively newly licensed lawyer.

— Emily Baxter, Council on Crime and Justice

7. Project Implementation

By now, your supervisors are trained, your VISTAs are recruited and trained, and you are ready to start implementing your project with the assistance of your new VISTAs. During the first year, the VISTA supervisor is required to complete quarterly Project Progress Reports in eGrants. After the first year reporting may be reduced to two Project Progress Reports a year. You must also verify the status of your VISTAs each pay period.

Keys to Success: Effective Supervision & Project Implementation

For your proposal, think of the VISTAs in terms of capacity building, then make that vision narrow. Recruit, screen, and train your VISTAs carefully, and slowly let them develop ownership; give them room to make the projects “theirs” in some way.

— Dori Rose Inda, Watsonville Law Center

Include the VISTA as a regular employee. Make them feel like a part of your organization and mission, and not just a temporary assistant.

— John Freeman, Minnesota Legal Services State Support

Supervision is key to the success of a project, especially when VISTAs are entrusted with working with our client population. Being a sounding board for ideas and a go-to place for questions is also vital. I try to keep an open door policy for all of my staff. Finally, treat your VISTA as a valued member of your team; get to know them personally, and play a part in their growth as a person.

— Susan Zielke, Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance Foundation

Be flexible. Some of the assumptions we made were not born out when our VISTAs started digging in and working on a project. We needed to be able to adapt to the actual conditions in the community.

— Sarah Megan, Prairie State Legal Services

A well-designed VISTA Assignment Description (VAD) can be very helpful to members and supervisors in carrying out a project, and can ensure that a new VISTA member understands the goals of the project and what is expected of them. Designating a supervisor who has enough time to guide a member, especially a member who has little or no professional experience, is key. Flexibility in designing projects is also important, so that a member has basic activities along with additional options in case he or she runs out of things to do. It is also important to involve VISTA members in organizational and community activities, treat them in a professional manner, thank them for their service, and value their contributions to the organization.

— Alison Paul, Montana Legal Services Association

8. Closeout

When your project ends, you will be expected to provide a final Project Progress Report and submit any financial reports, if required. If you are a cost share sponsor, you will also need to submit payment for the final invoice approximately one month after the project end.

Final Thoughts

The VISTA program was absolutely worth the time and effort, and I would recommend it to other legal aid programs without hesitation. The output of our VISTAs far outstripped our costs in hosting, supervising, and mentoring them.

– John Freeman, Minnesota Legal Services

I would absolutely recommend the VISTA program. Speaking both as a former VISTA and as a VISTA supervisor, it is an extraordinary opportunity for the attorney and for the organization.

– Emily Baxter, Council on Crime & Justice

*The AmeriCorps*VISTA members have proven themselves as a critical component of the Shriver Center's success in working toward its mission to achieve economic and social justice for low-income individuals and families in Illinois and around the country. In addition to moving the Shriver Center advocacy agenda forward, the VISTAs are helping to build partnerships and internal capacities that are strengthening the Shriver Center's financial and staff resources and helping us make progress towards our organizational goals for long-term sustainability.*

– Elizabeth Ring, Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law

IV. HELPFUL LINKS & RESOURCES

For organizations considering VISTA sponsorship, there are numerous resources and technical assistance available to aid with every phase and aspect of your project. Good places to start are:

- Your State CNCS Office: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/contact/stateoffices.asp>
- AmeriCorps VISTA website: http://www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/apply/vista.asp

This site also provides links to useful printed resources such as:

- [Is AmeriCorps VISTA Right for Your Organization?: A Guide to Becoming an AmeriCorps VISTA Project Sponsor](#)
 - [AmeriCorps VISTA Project Application and Instructions](#)
 - [AmeriCorps VISTA Program Guidance and Federal Register Guidelines](#)
 - [AmeriCorps VISTA Handbook](#)
- Additional resources for VISTA sponsors are available at:
<http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/resources-specific-groups/americorps-vista>

V. APPENDIX

The following are draft documents submitted by past or current VISTA sponsors to use as a reference.

- Council on Crime and Justice – “Super VAD”
- Council on Crime and Justice – Employment Services & Volunteer Development
- Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota – Program Evaluation & Development
- Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota – Development Associate
- Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota – Volunteer Coordinator
- Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago – Pro Se Divorce Clinic Coordinator
- Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago – Financial Literacy Project
- Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago – Predatory Lending Project
- Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago – Juvenile Court Expungement Helpdesk
- Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago – Legal Clinic Coordinator
- Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance – Foreclosure Mediation Project
- Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance – Service Equalization Project
- Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance – Domestic Violence Project
- Montana Legal Services Association – VISTA Project Summary
- Prairie State Legal Services - Community Legal Services Expansion and Impact Project
- Prairie State Legal Services – Medical- Legal Cooperative Services Project
- Prairie State Legal Services – Public Benefits Access Project
- Prairie State Legal Services – Foreclosure Mediation Project
- Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law – Financial Literacy
- Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law – Healthy Futures
- Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law – Education and Training Programs
- Watsonville Law Center – Collaborative and Partnership Development, Outreach & Education (1)
- Watsonville Law Center – Collaborative and Partnership Development, Outreach & Education (2)

<p align="center">AmeriCorps*VISTA SuperVAD</p> <p align="center">Site Name: Council on Crime and Justice- Criminal Records Project Attorney Year created: Position began in 2009, SuperVAD created 2010</p> <p align="center">***INSTRUCTIONS and TEMPLATE***</p> <p align="center"><i>Please see “SuperVAD Instructions” for information on completing this SuperVAD. A typical SuperVAD should have 3-5 Action Plans, with 2-4 Performance Milestones, and should encompass the work you intend for your VISTA to complete over the three-year project period.</i></p>		
<p><u>Community Need:</u> Due to increases in conviction rates, easier (and instant) access to criminal records, and more discrimination based upon criminal records of all types on the part of employers and landlords, thousands of people in Minnesota are unable to access affordable, safe housing and gainful employment. Communities need pro bono attorneys to help individuals seal records that are preventing them from employment, housing, licensure, and schooling. Pro bono attorneys and people representing themselves need free, easy-to use forms that organizes the law to create an individualized petition for each person based on finite responses to a set of questions.</p>		
<p><u>Goal Statement:</u> Work with the state courts, ProjusticeMN, and Minnesota Legal Services Center in developing free, easy-to-use, and comprehensive criminal expungement forms, leading to more attorneys assisting clients with expungement, more people effectively representing themselves, and an increase in the number of persons with criminal backgrounds gaining employment and housing.</p>		
<p><u>Performance Milestone A:</u> Attorney will be able to assist indigent individuals with criminal records petition the Court to seal his or her records; this expungement will reduce the collateral consequences associated with criminal records.</p> <p>Indicator: Number of attorneys using HotDocs</p> <p>Target: Year One: 25 attorneys access the forms on behalf of clients. Year Two: An additional 25 attorneys access the forms. Year Three: An additional 25 attorneys</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work in tandem with MN Legal Services Center to create and implement a fully functioning and usable Hotdocs form (Y1 Q1-3). 2. Develop training for how to best utilize the HotDocs form and begin training attorneys (Y1 Q3-Y2 Q2). 3 Survey attorneys using the HotDocs form, as well as those who decided not to use it, to determine what is working and what is not. VISTA will then work MN Legal Services Center to implement changes to forms to make them more easily accessed and used. (Y2 Q2-Y3 Q4) 4. Keep abreast of statutory changes and new case law in order to make necessary corrections to the automated memoranda portion of the HotDocs form (Y2 Q2-Y3 Q4). 	

<p>access the forms.</p> <p>Instrument: Records taken from online usage.</p>		
<p><u>Performance Milestone B:</u> Social Services agencies will assist indigent individuals with criminal records in petitioning the Court to seal their records from public view; this expungement will reduce the collateral consequences to criminal records.</p> <p>Indicator: Number of non-legal professionals in the social service field using the program</p> <p>Target: Year One: (See note in action steps) Year Two: 25 non-legal professionals in the social service field access the forms on behalf of clients Year Three: An additional 25 non-legal professionals in the social service field access the forms on behalf of clients</p> <p>Instrument: Records taken from online usage.</p>	<p>** Please note, due to the amount of time it will take to create a first version of HotDocs for the legally trained, the Year 1 VISTA will not be working towards this goal. The VISTA in Year 2 will be able to take the information garnered from the initial usage in Year 1 to begin to craft this document towards those who are not trained in the criminal justice field.</p> <p>1. Working in tandem with MN Legal Services Center to create and implement a fully functioning and usable Hotdocs form for non-legally trained professionals (Y2 Q1-3).</p> <p>2. Develop training for how to best utilize the HotDocs form and begin training non-legal professionals in the social service field (Y2 Q2-Y3 Q4).</p> <p>3 Survey non-legal professionals in the social service field using the HotDocs form, as well as those who decided not to use it, to determine what is working and what is not. VISTA will then work with MN Legal Services Center to implement changes to forms to make them more easily accessed and used. (Y2 Q3-Y3 Q4)</p> <p>4. Keep abreast of statutory changes and new case law in order to make necessary corrections to the automated memoranda portion of the HotDocs form (Y2 Q1-Y3 Q4).</p>	
<p><u>Performance Milestone C:</u> Indigent individuals with criminal records, who do not have access to private attorneys, will have access to HotDocs forms which will allow them to file petitions for expungement on their own behalf to reduce the collateral consequences of their criminal records.</p> <p>Indicator: Number of individuals to access the pro se version of the form.</p> <p>Target:</p>	<p>** Please note, being able to allow individuals to have direct access to an easy to use form that will allow them to apply for expungements will revolutionize expungements in the State of Minnesota. Because of the amount of work it will take to get the form into a state where a individual without any legal or professional training can easily understand and file the petition, a VISTA in this position would begin working towards this goal during year one, but likely would not be able to see results towards this goal until Year 3.</p> <p>1. Work in tandem with MN Legal Services Center to create and implement a fully functioning and usable pro se Hotdocs</p>	<p>Return to Appendix</p>

<p>Year One: Begin developing relationships with courts.</p> <p>Year Two: Forms placed on state courts website.</p> <p>Year Three: 100 individuals use pro se HotDocs forms.</p> <p>Instrument: Tracking form use on website.</p>	<p>form for non-legally trained individuals affected by criminal records (Y2 Q1-3).</p> <p>2. Develop training for how to best utilize the HotDocs form and begin holding seminars for the public at various district court locations. (Y2 Q3-Y3 Q4).</p> <p>3 Utilizing an online survey tool, survey the non-legally trained individuals using the pro se HotDocs form to determine what is working and what is not. VISTA will then work with MN Legal Services Center to implement changes to forms to make them more easily accessed and used. (Y3 Q1-Y3 Q4)</p> <p>4. Keep abreast of statutory changes and new case law in order to make necessary corrections to the automated memoranda portion of the pro se HotDocs form (Y2 Q1-Y3 Q4).</p>	
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<i>Action Plan #2: Develop a Statewide Volunteer Attorney Training Program</i>	<i>Action Steps</i>	<i>Summary of Accomplished Objectives – to be completed and submitted with each quarter’s progress report. (Please provide quantifiable information.)</i>
Community Need: Currently, in the State of Minnesota, Southern Minnesota Legal Services assists a handful of individuals each year in filing expungements; the Neighborhood Justice Center files a few more than SMRLS, though not many; and a smattering of Public Defense offices throughout the state may assist former clients with expungements, though not on a regular basis. The VISTA will work with the Volunteer Lawyers Network to help these attorneys and more across the state better understand the effect and prevention of collateral consequences so that they can better serve clients.		
Goal Statement: Increase the number of individuals who receive free expungement services while also increasing the number of individuals who are better educated as to possible future collateral consequences, thereby reducing the number of persons in need of expungements in the future.		
<p>Performance Milestone A: Volunteer attorneys provide free expungement services to clients.</p> <p>Indicator: Number of registered volunteer attorneys</p> <p>Target:</p>	<p>1. Develop training curriculum on collateral consequences (as well as how to file for expungements using the new HotDocs form) (Y1, Q2-Q4)</p> <p>2. Locate and recruit volunteers attorneys who would be willing and able to provide free expungement services to clients. (Starting Y1 Q2 and continuing through Y3 Q4)</p> <p>3. Provide training to volunteer attorneys (Starting Y1 Q2 and continuing through Y3 Q4).</p>	

<p>Year One: 20 attorneys Year Two: An additional 20 attorneys. Year Three: An additional 20 attorneys.</p> <p>Instrument: Volunteer attorney roster.</p>		
<p><u>Performance Milestone B:</u> Impoverished individuals will receive free expungement services from registered volunteer attorneys</p> <p>Indicator: Individuals receiving expungement assistance.</p> <p>Target: Year One: 40 individuals Year Two: An additional 40 individuals. Year Three: An additional 40 individuals.</p> <p>Instrument: Case completion tracking with volunteer attorneys.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Serve as resource for registered volunteer attorneys as they provide free expungement services to impoverished clients. (Y1 Q2 and ongoing).2. Continually improve training to incorporate frequently asked questions and address common road blocks. (Y1 Q2 and ongoing).	
<p><u>Performance Milestone C:</u> Registered volunteer attorneys will state that they better understand the effect and prevention of collateral consequences and that they feel they have provided better services to their clients.</p> <p>Indicator: Number of attorneys stating that they are better educated on collateral sanctions.</p> <p>Target: Year One: 70% of respondents agree Year Two: 75% of respondents agree Year Three: 80% of respondents agree</p> <p>Instrument: Survey tool</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To create and disseminate survey for registered volunteer attorneys where they will be able to assess the effectiveness of the information provided by the VISTA.	

<i>Action Plan #3: Train employers on Fair Hiring Practices and improve access to liveable wages.</i>	<i>Action Steps</i>	<i>Summary of Accomplished Objectives – to be completed and submitted with each quarter’s progress report. (Please provide quantifiable information.)</i>
<u>Community Need:</u> One of the greatest barriers to the employment for persons with criminal records is the lack of knowledge regarding safe but fair hiring on the part of employers. With the assistance of prior VISTAS, the Council has already developed the training curriculum; however, it needs to be refined and more employers need to be trained in order for more persons with criminal records to be able to have access to jobs.		
<u>Goal Statement:</u> Increase the number of persons with criminal records hired through training employers.		
<u>Performance Milestone A:</u> Employers will be trained on fair hiring practices. Indicator: # of employers that attend the training Target: Year One: 20 employers Year Two: Additional 40 employers Year Three: Additional 40 employers Instrument: Training registrations	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Update current curriculum on Fair Hiring Practices (Beginning in Y1 Q1 and continuing as the law changes through Y3 Q4).2. Train employers on Fair Hiring Practices (Y1 Q1- ongoing)3. Create online webinar to reduce cost of providing the training while increasing access to the training (Y2 Q2).4. Educate employers and those in the employment industry (ie DEED, etc) on how to access the newly created webinar which will increase the number of employers who access the training and have the potential to implement Fair Hiring Practices in their organizations. (Y2 Q2 and ongoing).	
<u>Performance Milestone B:</u> Create a group of employers who will be a part of a Fair Hiring Coalition, thereby changing the stigmatism associated with hiring persons with criminal records. Indicator: Number of employers willing to be part of the Fair Hiring Coalition Target: Year One: 15 employers Year Two: 30 employers Year Three: 45 employers Instrument: Coalition roster	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. After providing training to employers, maintain relationships with those employers (Y1 Q1 and ongoing).2. Using the formed relationships, encourage employers to become part of the Fair Hiring Coalition (Y1 Q1 and ongoing)	<div>Return to Appendix</div>

<p><u>Performance Milestone C:</u> Trained employers, and employers in the Fair Hiring Coalition, will hire persons with criminal records.</p> <p>Indicator: Number of persons with criminal records who gain employment.</p> <p>Target: Year One: 20 persons with criminal records hired. Year Two: An additional 40 persons with criminal records hired Year Three: An additional 40 persons with criminal records hired</p> <p>Instrument: Employer follow-up surveys.</p>	<p>1. Maintain relationships with the employers and administer survey to ensure that the trainings are having success in terms of more clients accessing employment (Y1 Q1 and ongoing)</p>	
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<i>Other Expectations</i>		
<p><u>Other VISTA Duties:</u></p> <p>VISTA will become a member of the Volunteer Lawyers Network. VISTA will also observe court and create and maintain good working relationships with the attorneys, agencies and the courts. VISTA will attend relevent continuing legal education courses.</p>		

AmeriCorps VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)

VISTA Project: Emerge * VISTA		VISTA Member Name:
Site Name: Council on Crime and Justice	Assignment Area: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Employment Services <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Services/Educ. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Volunteer Development	Date: July 25, 2011
VISTA Member Yearly Goals		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clients receiving services from the hotline will have a lower recidivism rates than those who do not receive services. 2. Clients receiving services will gain employment that will provide them with a wage above poverty levels. <p>Sub-Goals:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To educate attorneys and public service providers on the negative effects of criminal records, and to guide these persons on legal, regulatory, and practical ways to alleviate these effects for persons or clients involved in, or previously involved in, the criminal justice system. 2. To create sustainable relationships with local employers; help provide for greater opportunities for former offenders and persons with criminal records to obtain gainful employment. 		
VISTA Member Yearly Outcomes		
<p>Employment services Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create 20 relationships with local employers 100 former offenders / persons with criminal records will gain employment due to relationships created with employers 75% of employed former offenders / persons with criminal records will remain employed for at least 90 days Employed former offenders / persons with criminal records will earn an average of \$9 per hour <p>Volunteer Development Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit, place, and train 50 volunteers Volunteers will donate 2,000 hours 1,000 additional clients will receive services <p>Other Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of and implementation of statewide call-in system attorneys, the public, and public service providers can use to gain information and guidance on the negative effects of criminal records and ways to alleviate these effects. 100 volunteer attorneys, trained on the negative effects of criminal records and alleviation these effects, and organized to answer questions about effects and alleviation of these effects from callers using the call-in system. Increased access to employment for those who were at risk to being barred employment because of an impending criminal action or who were barred employment due to state and federal regulations or licensing requirements. 		

Emergence*VISTA

VISTA Member Activities and Steps Checklist		Planned Period of Work
Activity 1: Identify issues surrounding reentry		
Step 1.	Assist Director with Criminal Expungement Seminar	First Tuesdays of the First Three Months - training
Step 2.	Listen to participants regarding struggles and tapped resources	First Tuesdays of the Month - training
Step 3.	Follow up on resources for availability, accuracy, efficacy	Ongoing, emphasis on first month
Step 4.	Review CCJ's VISTA Collateral Sanctions manual	Three weeks
Step 5.	Update and add to manual. This is the manual that future volunteer attorneys will reference during their shifts.	Ongoing
Step 6.	Attend court hearings and review hearings regarding expungements and collateral sanctions	First month
Step 7.	Attend relevant Continuing Legal Education, Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, Society for Human Resources Management, and Reentry / Transitions meetings and trainings to keep abreast of law and issues	First month, ongoing
Activity 1 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:		Activity 1 Completed (date): _____
Activity 2: Develop training curriculum for volunteer attorneys		
Step 1.	Identify negative collateral consequences of criminal arrests, charges, and convictions	Ongoing, emphasis first three months
Step 2.	Identify remedies to these collateral consequences	Ongoing, emphasis first three months
Step 3.	Develop training materials for continuing legal education courses	Ongoing, begin after second month
Step 4.	Develop presentations of this material	Ongoing, begin after second month
Activity 2 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:		Activity 2 Completed (date): _____
Activity 3: Recruit and Train Attorneys		
Step 1.	Identify attorneys to recruit	Mid September
Step 2.	Approach law firms and bar associations	Late September
Step 3.	Approach the Volunteer Lawyers Network	Mid September
Step 4.	Invite attorneys to the CLE	October
Step 5.	Ensure CLE credit for course	Late September
Step 6.	Follow up with attorneys	October, ongoing
Step 7.	Provide additional training for specific areas of law (e.g., licensing, juvenile, sex offender registration)	October, ongoing
Step 8.	Update manual with commonly asked questions and provide answers	October, ongoing
Step 9.		
Step 10.		

Emerge*VISTA

Activity 3: Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:	Activity 3 Completed (date): _____
Activity 4: Pilot initial launch of information line	
Step 1. Identify and approach community partners	Late October
Step 2. Provide educational and resource materials to service providers, referencing the informational line. C	Early October
Step 3. Provide seminars to service providers to promote examples of information that can be accessed by calling the phone line	Early October
Step 4. Create fliers and trifolds explaining services	Early October
Step 5. Disseminate literature introducing the information line. Include examples of information one can obtain from calling.	Late October
Step 6. Create webpage for the informational line	Late October
Step 7. Reach out to bar associations, public defender offices, county attorney offices, and courts throughout the state regarding the resource. By informing the bench and bar regarding the collateral sanctions of various charges and pleas, we will significantly reduce the overall number of barriers.	Late October, ongoing
Step 8. Reach out to local organizations, neighborhood groups, and associations regarding the resource. These organizations will benefit directly from accessing the information line, as will their patrons.	November, ongoing
Activity 4 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:	Activity 4 Completed (date): _____
Activity 5: Make the informational line sustainable	
Step 1. Develop tracking procedures	Mid October
Step 2. Coordinate volunteers	Late October / Early November
Step 3. Celebrate volunteer commitment	December, ongoing
Step 4. Oversee volunteer time; ensure clarity and accuracy of responses	Late October, ongoing
Step 5. Continue to update manuals	Ongoing
Step 6. Partner with local firms and bar associations to commit to providing attorneys for the informational line	December
Step 7. Work with Advocacy Director to establish ongoing recruitment, training, and appreciation of volunteer attorneys.	January, ongoing
Activity 5 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:	Activity 5 Completed (date): _____
Activity 6: Approach employers willing to adopt fair hiring practices	
Step 1. Add information regarding the free informational line to CCJ's employer outreach materials	November, ongoing
Step 2. Develop web-based materials similar to the literature above	December, ongoing
Step 3. Recruit employment law and business law attorneys to work on the phone line	Late November, ongoing
Step 4. Consult with employers regarding information to be used on the	Late November,

Emerge*VISTA

phone line.	ongoing
Step 5. Create evaluation of employers' training and use of information line	January
Step 6. Make suggested improvements to training and phone line	February, ongoing
Activity 6 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:	Activity 1 Completed (date): _____
Activity 7: Create sustainability in volunteer relationships	
Step 1. Strengthen clinical relationships with local firms, providing a structured setting for pro bono hours	November, ongoing
Step 2. Begin clinical relationships with new firms	January
Step 3. Refer callers with certain concerns (e.g., juvenile expungement, executive pardon) to identified firms	February
Step 4. Supervise these clinics	February, ongoing
Step 5. Evaluate and improve these clinics	March, ongoing
Activity 7 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:	Activity 2 Completed (date): _____
Activity 8: Develop and implement evaluations of informational line	October
Step 1. Develop separate evaluation processes for persons with criminal records, service providers, attorneys, and employers accessing the informational line	October
Step 2. Follow up on suggested improvements to the line	November, ongoing
Activity 8: Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:	Activity 3 Completed (date): _____
Activity 9: Develop and implement evaluations of program for volunteer attorneys	
Step 1. Develop an evaluation for the volunteer attorneys regarding the recruitment, training, support, and time on the phone line.	November
Step 2. Follow up on improvements the volunteer attorneys suggest.	December
Activity 9 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:	Activity 4 Completed (date): _____
Activity 10: Expand partnership with Hennepin County and the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development to include the information line	
Step 1. Market the information line to our partners, highlighting specific information that their consumers will need to know (e.g., driving restrictions, public benefit prohibitions, and licensing barriers)	November
Step 2. Track the partners' consumers who access the line, following employment, earnings, and recidivism	November, ongoing
Step 3. Connect community partners to employers who have expressed an interest in hiring persons with criminal records	January, ongoing
Activity 10 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:	Activity 5 Completed (date): _____

AmeriCorps*VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)

VISTA Project: Program Evaluation & Development	VISTA Member Name:
Site Name: Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota	Assignment Area:
Date:	

VISTA Member Activities and Steps Checklist		Planned Period of Work
Goal: Stabilize and expand the fundraising program of the organization in order to ensure longevity.		
Activity 1: Write grants to foundations or fundraising letters to area businesses. Step 1: Step 2: Step 3:		Q1-4
Activity 1 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:		Activity 1 Completed (date): _____
Activity 2: Prepare interim and final reports to funders. Step 1: Step 2: Step 3:		Q1-4
Activity 2 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:		Activity 2 Completed (date): _____
Goal: Create mechanisms for program evaluation that provide a holistic view of the impacts of ILCM services on immigrant communities and enable ILCM to better serve the community by identifying needs and improving services.		
Activity 1: Identify shortcomings in current program evaluation system. Step 1: Step 2: Step 3:		Q1-2
Activity 1 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:		Activity 1 Completed (date): _____
Activity 2: Identify and implement new methods for program evaluation. Step 1: Step 2: Step 3:		Q1-4
Activity 2 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:		Activity 2 Completed (date): _____

Return to Appendix

AmeriCorps*VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)

VISTA Project: Development Associate	VISTA Member Name:
Site Name: Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota	Assignment Area:
Date:	

VISTA Member Activities and Steps Checklist	Planned Period of Work
Goal: Stabilize and expand the fundraising program of the organization in order to ensure longevity.	
Activity 1: Write grants to foundations or fundraising letters to area businesses. Step 1: Step 2: Step 3:	Q1-4
Activity 1 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:	Activity 1 Completed (date): _____
Activity 2: Prepare interim and final reports to funders. Step 1: Step 2: Step 3:	Q1-4
Activity 2 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:	Activity 2 Completed (date): _____

AmeriCorps*VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)

VISTA Project: Volunteer Coordinator	VISTA Member Name:
Site Name: Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota	Assignment Area:
Date:	

VISTA Member Activities and Steps Checklist	Planned Period of Work
Goal: Better use of the internet to communicate news and information about ILCM and immigration legal issues.	
Activity 1: Distribute quarterly newsletter Step 1: Step 2: Step 3:	Q1-4
Activity 1 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:	Activity 1 Completed (date): _____
Activity 2: Distribute action alerts Step 1: Step 2: Step 3:	Q1-4
Activity 2 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:	Activity 2 Completed (date): _____
Goal: To stabilize and manage volunteers for long-term internship positions with ILCM in the areas of general operations and legal work.	
Activity 1: Recruit and manage language and general office volunteers Step 1: Step 2: Step 3:	Q1-4
Activity 1 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:	Activity 1 Completed (date): _____

Return to Appendix

AmeriCorps*VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)

VISTA Project: Pro Se Divorce Clinic	VISTA Member Name:
Site Name: Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago	Assignment Area: Capacity Building
	Date: 1/3/11

VISTA Member Activities and Steps Checklist	Planned Period of Work
Goal Help self represented litigants seeking uncontested divorces to successfully and efficiently get divorced.	12 months
<p>Activity 1: Coordinate a clinic to instruct <u>Pro Se</u> litigants seeking to dissolve their marriages.</p> <p>Step 1: Update the curriculum, instruction manual and materials for the clinic (first two months of member's year of service).</p> <p>Step 2: Recruit 4-5 private attorneys to act as instructors at the clinic and to provide follow-up advice to <u>pro se</u> litigants (first three months of member's year of service).</p> <p>Step 3: Meet with community organizations, other legal service providers, and court personnel to develop a joint effort to publicize the service to potential clients.</p> <p>Step 4: Schedule clinic training sessions and publicize in local community papers in Chicago and other appropriate media and community outlets..</p>	12 months
Activity 1 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments: A well organized pro se clinic staffed by volunteer attorneys will assist self represented litigants to get uncontested divorces.	Activity 1 Completed: <u>1/1/12</u>
<p>Activity 2: Schedule, publicize and conduct at least two per month clinics for <u>pro se</u> litigants seeking to dissolve their marriages.</p> <p>Step 1: With volunteer attorneys instruct 20 clients per clinic on how to file, pursue and finalize a dissolution of their marriage.</p>	12 months

Project STAR**VISTA**

<p>Step 2: Assist volunteers to provide review of the Judgment of Dissolution, upon request, prior to presentation to the court for entry.</p> <p>Step 3: Refer clinic attendees to mediation, where necessary, when issues arise that cannot be resolved by the parties.</p> <p>Step 4: Publicize the clinic to legal service providers and social service agencies.</p>	
<p>Activity 2 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:</p> <p>200 + self represented litigants will successfully get judgments of dissolution of their marriages.</p>	<p>Activity 2 Completed:<u>1/1/12</u></p>

AmeriCorps*VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)

VISTA Project: Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago (LAF)		VISTA Member Name:
Site Name: Downtown Office	Assignment Area: : Volunteer Recruitment & Management , Facilitate Pro Se Clients, Capacity Building, Client Education	Date: 8/20/11

VISTA Member Activities and Steps Checklist		Planned Period of Work
Goals (from VISTA Project Plan) Increase access to justice for clients with severe financial problems: Educate clients emerging from severe financial problems on how to build or rebuild credit rating		
Activity 1: Develop panel of volunteers willing to assist clients who need to file bankruptcy: Step 1: Meet with attorneys to recruit volunteers and to identify the types of cases that are suitable for the volunteer attorneys Step 2: Develop training modules (materials and webcasts) for volunteer attorneys appropriate for their areas of interest Step 3: Establish and maintain panels of volunteer attorneys based on types of cases and availability Step 4: Coordinate referrals of clients to pro bono attorneys for cases where client cannot or should not file pro se		
Activity 1 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments: a. Recruiting and training of 15 additional volunteer attorneys b. Posting training modules online		Activity 1 Completed (date): 8/12
Activity 2: Develop materials and procedures for clients who are able to represent themselves in bankruptcy cases: Step 1: Using data from the pro se bankruptcy assistance desk, determine the major problems that make it difficult for clients to obtain full bankruptcy relief Step 2: Develop flow charts to show clients what they need to do in their case, checklists and instructions Step 3: Coordinate classes where pro se clients are taught (1) how to gather information needed to prepare bankruptcy documents and (2) what they need to do after filing and how to conduct themselves at creditors meetings.		
Activity 2 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments: a. Develop materials for pro se clients. b. Arrange for 8 sets of classes for pro se clients		Activity 2 Completed (date): 8/12

Activity 3 For clients who cannot represent themselves, coordinate matching of clients to volunteers: Step 1: Compile and maintain a directory of pro bono attorneys Step 2: Screen clients and expeditiously match them with appropriate volunteers Step 3: Assist clients in obtaining information needed by attorneys.	
Activity 3 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:	Activity 3 Completed (date): 8/12
Activity 4: Rebuilding credit Step 1. Develop materials to give to clients, use at community legal education events and post online about how to rebuild credit, and how to avoid scammers who promise quick credit repair. Step 2: Work with tenants groups, community groups and financial counselors interested in building credit for disadvantaged consumers. Step 3. Identify lenders who are willing to develop programs to work with clients who have poor credit history but have taken steps to improve it.	
Activity 4 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments: a. Conduct 5 CLE events. b. Find two financial institutions willing to extend credit to client with no or bad credit history who have taken credit education courses and have taken concrete steps to stop counterproductive behavior	Activity 4 Completed (date): 8/12

AmeriCorps*VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)

VISTA Project: Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago		VISTA Member Name:
Site Name: Main Office	Assignment Area: Capacity Building	Date: 8/20/11

VISTA Member Activities and Steps Checklist	Planned Period of Work
<p>Goal: Develop our ties with community partners to develop information as to how homeowners are being targeted by predatory lenders, and by whom and develop strategies in collaboration with these partners to reduce predatory lending practices and rescue fraud in their communities.</p>	
<p>Activity 1: Outreach to organizations to collect information and develop concrete mechanisms for reducing predatory lending practices and rescue fraud.</p> <p>Step 1: Review client data and other data that is available to ascertain in which communities victims of predatory lending practices or rescue fraud reside.</p> <p>Step 2: Meet with community leaders in Chicago low income neighborhoods for information and opinions regarding predatory lending practices and rescue fraud in their communities.</p> <p>Step 3: Coordinate with interested organizations a concerted advocacy approach with appropriate government agencies with whom we already have relationships (the Illinois Division of Banks and Real Estate, the Illinois Attorney General's Office, the Cook County State's Attorney's Office, the City of Chicago Department of Consumer Services, etc.).</p> <p>Step 4: Develop impact litigation strategies to address predatory lending practices and rescue fraud.</p> <p>Step 4: Develop written materials to be distributed strategically, and/or to be used in strategic training sessions.</p>	
<p>Activity 1 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - List of community organizations in communities identified and interested in collaborating. - Printed (English and Spanish) community legal education materials regarding predatory lending and rescue fraud. - Conduct 4 community training sessions for community organization staff on predatory lending and rescue fraud. - Chart of communities most impacted by predatory lending practices and rescue fraud. - Impact litigation that addresses predatory lending practices and rescue fraud. 	<p>Activity 1 Completed (date): 8/12</p>

AmeriCorps*VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)

VISTA Project: Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago (LAF)		VISTA Member Name:
Site Name: Main Office	Assignment Area: Volunteer Recruitment & Management , Capacity Building	Date: 8/20/11

VISTA Member Activities and Steps Checklist		Planned Period of Work
Goal : Coordinate a Help Desk at the Cook County Juvenile Court to assist juvenile offenders to expunge their records thereby improving their chances for jobs and educational opportunities.		
Activity 1: Work with pro bono attorneys and law students to provide legal assistance to petitioners: Step 1: Coordinate volunteers participation at Help Desk Step 2: Develop support materials for volunteers. Step 3: Provide training for new volunteers.		
Activity 1 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments: Volunteer attorneys provide assistance to juvenile offender to expunge their records.		Activity 1 Completed : 8/12
Activity 2: Develop and disseminate pro se materials for juvenile offenders to expunge their records. Step 1: Collects existing pro se materials from the Clerk of the Court and the Public Defender. Step 2: Put pro se materials into pro se packet. Step 3: Disseminate packets to appropriate organizations and agencies.		
Activity 2 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments: Juvenile offenders are able to access clear easy to use pro se materials and are thereby able to represent themselves to have their records expunged		Activity 2 Completed : 8/12
Goal: Increase access to justice for children in special education and school disciplinary matters in Cook County.		
Activity 1: Recruit, train, and support volunteer attorneys to provide legal assistance to children in special education and school disciplinary matters. Step 1: Organize a training for volunteer attorneys that is also available online. Step 2: Interview clients and collect evidence and make referral of appropriate cases to volunteer attorneys for representation. Step 3: Develop data base to track cases and outcomes.		
Activity 1 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments: Children are represented by volunteer attorneys in education matters.		Activity 1 Completed : 8/12

AmeriCorps*VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)

VISTA Project: : Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago (LAF)			VISTA Member Name:		
Site Name: Downtown Office		Assignment Area: Capacity Building		Date: 7/29/11	

VISTA Member Activities and Steps Checklist			Planned Period of Work
Goal: Improve access to justice in low income communities in Chicago and Suburban Cook County.			One Year
Activity 1: Coordinate an evening and Saturday legal clinics in the Logan Square community in collaboration with the New Covenant Community Church and in the Woodlawn Community in collaboration with the Woodlawn Children's Promise Zone and the law firm DLA Piper. Step 1: Prepare materials to recruit volunteer attorneys, including online presentations. Step 2: Coordinate volunteer training and support. Step 3: Coordinate volunteer participation in the clinic.			
Activity 1 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments: Low income Logan Square and Woodlawn residents will have access to a free legal assistance in the evening and on Saturdays.			Activity 1 Completed (date): 7/12
Activity 2: Improve LAF's outreach and community profile in low income communities throughout Chicago. Step 1: Identify areas where LAF should be connecting with community groups. Step 2: Create materials (In English & Spanish) which can be distributed and improve existing materials that provide information to low income residents that will improve their access to justice. Step 3: Coordinate community legal education programs (In English & Spanish) in identified communities.			
Activity 2 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments: Low income residents of Chicago will have improved access to justice.			Activity 2 Completed (date): 7/12
Activity 3: Develop and coordinate legal clinics in low income communities. Step 1: Identify viable community groups to collaborate in developing legal clinics. Step 2: Coordinate volunteer training and support Step 3: Coordinate volunteer participation in the clinics.			
Activity 3 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments: Low income in Chicago and Suburban Cook County residents will have access to a free legal assistance.			Activity 3 Completed (date): 7/12

AmeriCorps*VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)

SAMPLE

A VISTA Assignment Description (VAD) can be designed in many different ways; you can use any model that works well for your project. This sample VAD was developed by Project STAR and can be modified to meet your needs.

VISTA Project: Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance –		VISTA Member Name:	
Site Name: Western Regional Office, Alton, IL	Assignment Area: Madison County, IL	Date: August 2010-August 2011	

VISTA Member Activities and Steps Checklist		Planned Period of Work
Goal (from VISTA Project Plan): .		August 2010-August 2011
Activity 1: Research and Identify best practices for foreclosure mediation program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze existing foreclosure programs across the country to identify best-practices that will work within Madison County, and draft proposal. Research circuit court data to gather information on the number and nature of foreclosure filings within the last 24 months to include within proposal. Establish foreclosure mediation eligibility guidelines based on homeowners' income and payment amount, as well as ability of homeowner to meet payment obligation if loan were modified. Develop homeowner application form for participation in foreclosure mediation 		August - November 2010
Activity 1 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:		Activity 1 Completed (date): _____
Activity 2: Recruit and train mediators and identify other resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop foreclosure mediation handbook and forms for use by mediators and court. Recruit mediator trainers, including trainers in mediation as well as trainers in foreclosure law. Recruit and train volunteer mediators. Identify, recruit and train agencies/resources to perform homeowner eligibility screening for the Residential Foreclosure Mediation Program 		October 2010 and ongoing
Activity 2 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:		Activity 2 Completed (date): _____

Activity 3: Assist in identifying eligible homeowners for participation in mediation and assess outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist housing counseling attorney in performing housing counseling intake in 12 county service region • Screen applicants for eligibility to participate in the Residential Foreclosure Mediation Program. • Coordinate mediation referrals with other agencies, mediators and the court • Gather and assess outcomes from participation in Residential Foreclosure Mediation Program 	January 2011 and ongoing
Activity 3 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:	Activity 3 Completed (date): _____

AmeriCorps*VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)

VISTA Project: Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance – Service Equalization		VISTA Member Name:
Site Name: Southern Regional Office, Carbondale, IL	Assignment Area: Equalization of Services in 4 underserved counties	Date: August 2010-August 2011

VISTA Member Activities and Steps Checklist		Planned Period of Work
Goal (from VISTA Project Plan): <i>To target 4 underserved counties and increase services by outreach, recruitment of private attorneys and providing direct service.</i>		August 2010-August 2011
Activity 1: Outreach Step 1: Make a list of service providers to contact in the affected counties. Step 2: Develop a presentation to be made to service providers regarding services provided by Land of Lincoln. Step 3: Schedule a meeting at each provider to provide information on services provided by Land of Lincoln. Step 4: Develop a community legal education presentation to be given in the affected counties. Step 5: Consult with local service agencies about where and when to offer the education events. Step 6: Schedule and present the events.		August - December 2010
Activity 1 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:		Activity 1 Completed (date): _____
Activity 2: Recruitment of Private Attorneys Step 1: Obtain a list of all private attorneys in the affected counties. Step 2: Work with _____ (our private bar involvement coordinator) to develop a plan to recruit attorneys to the program. Step 3: Use plan developed to recruit attorneys.		September 2010 and ongoing
Activity 2 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:		Activity 2 Completed (date): _____
Activity 3: Direct Representation Step 1: Develop modifications to current case acceptance policies to increase intake from affected counties. Step 2: Prioritize representation in cases that will bring us in contact with the court system and state and federal agencies providing benefits for the poor. Step 3: Run reports quarterly in order to determine if services being provided to the affected counties are, in fact, increasing.		August 2010 and ongoing
Activity 3 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:		Activity 3 Completed (date): _____

AmeriCorps*VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)

SAMPLE

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VISTA Project: Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance – Domestic Violence Clinic		VISTA Member Name:
Site Name: Champaign	Assignment Area: Domestic Violence Clinic	Date: August 2010- August 2011

VISTA Member Activities and Steps Checklist		Planned Period of Work
Goal (from VISTA Project Plan): <i>Strengthen relationship with domestic violence shelters in Champaign and Vermilion Counties and develop a relationship with domestic violence shelters in the surrounding area.</i>		August 2010- August 2011
Activity 1: Kick-off meeting Step 1: Contact the two shelters in Champaign and Vermilion Counties – A Woman’s Place/Center for Women in Transition and Your Family Resource Connection. Step 2: Organize a meeting with the leadership and advocates to discuss the domestic violence clinic. Step 3: Assist the domestic violence clinic supervisors with preparing for and conducting the meeting.		August - September 2010
Activity 1 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:		Activity 1 Completed (date): _____
Activity 2: Ongoing communication Step 1: Communicate on a monthly basis (at a minimum) with the local domestic violence shelters in Champaign and Vermilion County about Land of Lincoln’s services, assistance to referrals from the shelters, and needs that the shelters might have that the project can meet. Step 2: Consider developing an email newsletter about domestic violence and law related issues that can be a product of the partnership between the shelters and Land of Lincoln.		September 2010 and ongoing
Activity 2 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:		Activity 2 Completed (date): _____
Activity 3: Training Step 1: Contact the shelters to see what legal issues come up with frequency and/or they would like some basic training on. Step 2: Develop training modules on those issues, with input from the clinic supervisors. Step 3: Schedule training events with the shelters, to be conducted by the clinic		October 2010 and ongoing

Project STAR**VISTA**

supervisors and/or VISTA.	
Activity 3 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:	Activity 3 Completed (date): _____
Activity 4: Outreach Step 1: Contact the two shelters that serve our surrounding counties – DOVE and BETH'S Place. Step 2: Organize a meeting with the leadership and advocates to discuss the domestic violence clinic. Step 3: Assist the domestic violence clinic supervisors with preparing for and conducting the meeting.	November 2010 and ongoing
Activity 4 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:	Activity 4 Completed (date): _____
VISTA Member Activities and Steps Checklist	Planned Period of Work
Goal (from VISTA Project Plan): <i>Strengthen and expand the domestic violence civil litigation clinic.</i>	
Activity 1: Training Step 1: Attend a 40-hour domestic violence training. Step 2: Attend domestic violence clinic classes. Step 3: Develop materials/hand-outs to help law student volunteers better understand domestic violence issues, Order of Protection and divorce processes, etc. Step 4: Make self available to law students to answer questions, lend an ear, troubleshoot, and brainstorm.	September 2010 and ongoing
Activity 1 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:	Activity 1 Completed (date): _____
Activity 2: Case handling Step 1: Provide legal assistance to victims of domestic violence, so as to better understand the processes the VISTA is providing support for.	August 2010
Activity 2 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:	Activity 2 Completed (date): _____
Activity 3: Reporting and Fundraising Step 1: Research funding opportunities to enable Land of Lincoln and the College of Law to maintain the domestic violence civil litigation clinic. Step 2: Provide reports to funding sources and potential funding sources about the work being done by the clinic. Step 3: Assist in applying for funding opportunities as they arise.	August 2010 and ongoing

Montana Legal Services Association

AmeriCorps Vista Project -

Second, please submit your responses – brief or lengthy, we are happy to get whatever you can provide, answers need *not* be comprehensive -- on the following topics.

1. How many years have you sponsored VISTAs? How many VISTAs do you sponsor each year?

MLSA has sponsored VISTA members since the 1980s. MLSA increased the size of its Vista project in 2004 to include placing Vista members at other programs, and has administered an operational grant as an intermediary program placing VISTA members with organizations throughout Montana since 2006. MLSA currently sponsors 27 VISTA members with organizations throughout the state, and has sponsored up to 35 members in the past.

2. Briefly describe the ultimate results or outcomes of your project(s). (For those with many VISTAs over many years, just pick a sampling of your favorites. Any easily cited statistics are helpful, but not necessary.)

In the past year, MLSA VISTAs have recruited and trained 2,039 volunteers who provided 58,524 hours of service. They also raised \$391,943 in cash and \$74,148 in in-kind contributions for their organizations.

Some highlights of past MLSA VISTA projects include:

- The development of www.montanafreefile.org, a collaboration of several organizations to provide tax information on a website, and the facilitation of Montana's participation in the I-CAN e-filing program;
- The development of MontanaLawHelp.org as one of the first informational websites for legal services programs;
- The creation of the B-SAFE program, an IDA program for domestic violence survivors to access resources to assist them in becoming financially literate and able to live independently and free of violence;
- The rebuild and relaunch of the www.mtlsa.org website on a user friendly WordPress platform; and

- The development of self-help law kiosks in rural and remote parts of Montana, so people can opt to do research on their own or with the assistance of a LiveHelp operator who conducts live chat to assist the user in navigating legal information on the Internet.
 - The development of a pro bono mediation program;
 - Conducting a legal needs survey in Montana;
 - The development of a client satisfaction survey and process for MLSA's Helpline;
 - The development of community outreach campaigns, including MLSA's popular coaster campaign and the placement of MLSA brochure racks in every courthouse in Montana.
3. Please generally describe the amount of time and resources your organization invested in managing your VISTA(s) and project (including developing a project and drafting the VISTA application, and training, supervising, and supporting your VISTA(s)). Please include your cash cost/VISTA, and whether you provide a cost share contribution.

MLSA employs an AmeriCorps Coordinator who oversees the MLSA VISTA Project and the AmeriCorps*State Justice for Montanans Project. MLSA's Director of Community Engagement supervises the AmeriCorps Coordinator, and devotes a small portion of his time to assisting her in these efforts. Since MLSA acts as an intermediary placement organization, it does require significant resources to coordinate with potential and actual sites, recruit candidates, provide training, support members and supervisors, and otherwise supporting members and their projects.

MLSA charges a cost share to VISTA sites of \$2,500 for the first year of a project, \$4,500 for the second year, and \$6,000 in the third year. MLSA also has cost share contracts with the Montana Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence and Montana Credit Unions for Community Development. These are membership based organizations that provide Vista members to their membership organizations as a benefit. MLSA's current cost share contribution for 27 VISTA members is \$58,872 for the upcoming year (or a 5.5 member cost share). Funds to pay this cost share come from the fees charged to the Vista sites. This allows MLSA to also sponsor internal Vista members at no charge.

4. Was your VISTA experience worth the time and effort invested? Would you recommend hosting a VISTA to other legal services organizations? Why or why not?

Yes, and yes. An MLSA VISTA member can energize a project, devote time and expertise to help build organizational capacity, and help a legal aid organization connect with other organizations through the AmeriCorps networking community.

5. Please share your top tips for success or most important lessons learned that you think are useful for legal services providers contemplating sponsoring a VISTA. Is there anything you

know now that you wish you had known before? (E.g., keys to planning or writing an ultimately successful VISTA proposal, hiring/recruiting tips, effective supervision or project management practices, etc.).

In designing a VISTA project, it is very important to understand what a VISTA member can and cannot do. In other words, organizations should be aware that VISTA members serve in projects to build capacity, and do not provide direct services or act as administrative support staff. Site supervisors consistently report that a well-designed VISTA Assignment Description can be very helpful to members and supervisors in carrying out a project. Designating a supervisor who has enough time to guide a member, especially a member who has little or no professional experience, is key to a project's success. Along these lines, setting up a process so that a new member can understand the goals of the project (volunteers to be recruited, money to be raised, etc.) in the very first week is helpful so he or she will know what will be expected and what the project progress reports will require. Flexibility in designing projects is also important, so that a member has basic activities along with additional options in case he or she runs out of things to do. In recruiting a VISTA member, it is important to screen to the extent possible for applicants who are committed to service, sufficiently qualified to execute the project, and suitably "matched" with the organization and the supervision style of his or her supervisor. It is also important to involve VISTA members in organizational and community activities, treat them in a professional manner, thank them for their service, and value their contributions to the organization.

6. Please share any other comments or suggestions that might help legal services providers decide whether to pursue VISTA(s).

It may be useful to contact the field office in the provider's state to find out if there are any intermediary organizations placing VISTA members with sites like the provider organization.

AmeriCorps*VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)

SAMPLE

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VISTA Project: Project Community Legal Services Expansion and Impact Project		VISTA Member Name:	
Site Name: Prairie State	Assignment Area: Rockford	Date: 9/27/2010	

VISTA Member Activities and Steps Checklist		Planned Period of Work
Goal (from VISTA Project Plan): To help low income residents to obtain the legal information and legal services needed to resolve problems impacting their ability to meet their basic human needs, the VISTA project will develop a sustainable plan utilizing new partnerships for outreach and creating a volunteer recruitment and management system for Prairie State Legal Services (PSLS).		
Activity 1: Identify potential new grant funding sources for legal services Step 1: Use online tools to research local foundations Step 2: Use online tools to research potential sources of governmental grants Step 3: Prepare recommendations for each service area Step 4: Prepare guide explaining how to do research, how recommendations were selected for use by future VISTAs		11/25-12/31 01/02/2011-9/15/2011 1/02/2011-3/31/2011 04/01/2011-7/31/2011
Activity 1 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:		Activity 1 Completed (date): _____
Activity 2: Identify potential contributors Step 1: Research small to mid-size banks in the service area including the Community Reinvestment Act officers Step 2: Assist in making contacts with such entities for the purpose of building financial support Step 3: Prepare at least 3 proposals seeking financial support for legal services for low income persons in order to improve financial stability and/or collaborative financial education training for low income persons Step 4. Implement collaborative programs Step 5. Prepare summary of steps and recommendations for future VISTAs		11/25-3/31/2011 11/25-3/31/2011 01/02/2011-03/31/2011 2/01/2011-4/30/2011 12/01/2010-05/31/2011
Activity 2 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:		Activity 2 Completed

Project STAR**VISTA**

	(date): _____
Activity 3: Assist in the preparation of grant applications in coordination with PSLS development staff Step 1: Create digital grant development system with all common attachments needed, and common portions for grant requests. Step 2: Assist in the drafting of grant applications upon request Step 3: Develop proposals to help increase access to legal services for low income persons	12/2/2010-5/31/2011 03/01/2011-10/30/2011 01/02/2011-10/31/2011
Activity 3 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:	Activity 3 Completed (date): _____
Activity 4: Recruit two volunteers to assist in the management of data systems for development Step 1: Identify the specific skills and requirements for volunteers Step 2: Identify potential sources for volunteers with the skills needed and with consideration of skill development for low income persons. Step 3: Prepare volunteer job descriptions Step 4: Advertise for positions and arrange interviews with PSLS staff Step5: Prepare guide for training of volunteers in this function	11/25-2/28/2011 11/25/2010-2/28/2011 11/25/2010-2/28/2011 2/01/2011-7/31/2011 02/01/2011-9/30/2011
Activity 4 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:	Activity 4 Completed (date): _____

AmeriCorps*VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)

SAMPLE

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VISTA Project Community Legal Services VISTA Member Name:		
Expansion and Impact Project		
Site Name: : Prairie State Legal Services	Assignment Area: Manager Medical- Legal Cooperative Services	Date: 6/16/2010

VISTA Member Activities and Steps Checklist	Planned Period of Work
Goal (from VISTA Project Plan): To help low income residents to obtain the legal information and legal services needed to resolve problems impacting their ability to meet their basic human needs, the VISTA project will develop a sustainable plan utilizing new partnerships for outreach and creating a volunteer recruitment and management system for PSLS.	6/21/2010-6/14/2011
Activity 1: Establish relationships with medical clinics serving low income and elderly persons in service area	
Step 1: Identify at least 10 of the primary medical clinics serving low income persons in targeted areas within the PSLS service area	7/31/2010
Step 2: Interview at least 3 key informants from the medical community regarding legal needs of their patients (in coordination with VISTA community survey project). Interviews will include discussion of possible training topics that medical providers would be interested in obtaining from PSLS. The interviews will also identify if the medical providers would like PSLS to distribute information on health care issues.	9/15/2010
Step 3: Identify best prospect(s) for medical legal partnerships in a brief report (no more than 2 page memo).	11/15/2010
Step 4: Facilitate meeting of PSLS staff and medical provider(s) to develop specific plan to implement medical-legal partnership.	2/28/2011
Step 5: Draft memoranda of understanding for the implementation of partnership.	5/31/2011

Activity 1 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:	Activity 1 Completed (date):_____
<p>Activity 2: Develop training module for medical providers on legal issues impacting their low income/elderly patients including training on disability benefit eligibility rules.</p> <p>Step 1: Work in coordination with the Director of Advocacy Training to collect materials used for training of medical providers on SSA disability rules and materials such as forms used to ease the preparation of medical reports for SSA.</p> <p>Step 2: Develop training module</p> <p>Step 3: Conduct at least 4 training sessions for medical providers regarding the SSA rules and how the medical providers can aid patients in obtaining needs based disability income and medical benefits and other topics identified by medical providers.</p>	<p>10/31/2010</p> <p>12/15/2010</p> <p>6/14/2011</p>
Activity 2 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:	Activity 2 Completed (date):_____
<p>Activity 3: Develop strategies and systems to improve services for persons with disabilities so they may qualify for public benefits.</p> <p>Step 1: Assess potential strategies to obtain specialized medical evaluations and testing for PSLS clients including, recruiting volunteer specialists, developing targeted funding for such services, identifying potential legal options to require government entities to pay for such evaluations and report in brief memo (no more than 2 pages).</p> <p>Step 2: Assess potential strategies to aid low income persons applying for legal services in disability benefit denials. Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a potential strategy for using volunteers to assist applicants with disabilities brief assistance. • materials to be prepared to inform low income persons with disabilities on steps they may take themselves to expedite their disability claim and access to medical care. 	<p>2/15/2011</p> <p>4/30/2011</p> <p>5/15/2011</p>

Project STAR**VISTA**

<p>Step 3: Prepare a brief written recommendation on the best potential strategies</p> <p>Step 4: Implement the strategies identified and approved by PSLS including a sustainable plan to improve information provided to persons seeking legal help in appeals of denials of disability benefits.</p>	6/14/2011
Activity 3 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:	Activity 3 Completed (date): _____
<p>Activity 4: Develop outreach efforts to reach targeted populations for legal education and to improve knowledge about the legal services available.</p> <p>Step 1: In coordination with VISTA community survey project, identify underserved populations and potential medical outreach locations</p> <p>Step 2: Conduct at least 4 outreach activities and document in the PSLS case management system.</p> <p>Step 3: Evaluate the effect of outreach (number of new clients from target area)</p>	<p>10/15/2010</p> <p>5/15/2011</p> <p>6/14/2011</p>
Activity 4 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:	Activity 4 Completed (date): _____

AmeriCorps*VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)

SAMPLE

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VISTA Project: Prairie State Legal Services		VISTA Member Name:	
Site Name: Waukegan Office	Assignment Area:	Date: August 5, 2011	

VISTA Member Activities and Steps Checklist		Planned Period of Work
Goal (from VISTA Project Plan): To develop sustainable resources to improve low-income persons' access to public benefits affecting basic human needs.		
Activity 1: Develop understanding and competency in Social Security's rules, regulations, practices and procedures for determining disability for SSI and Title II Disability claims. Step 1: Attend SOAR training via DuPage Federation of Human Services to learn about SOAR methodology Step 2: Participate in PSLs SSI/SSDI conference calls, relevant taskforce meetings and other internal training Step 3: Review training materials, including those prepared by PSLs VISTA in Vista Year 1, on developing SSI cases Step 4: Review materials available on (www.illinoislegaladvocate.org) and www.IllinoisProBono.org related to legal issues impacting persons with disabilities.		Start date- 10/31/2011 By 10/31/2011 Ongoing By 10/31/2011 By 10/31/2011
Activity 1 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:		Activity 1 Completed (date): _____
Activity 2: Develop competency in Prairie State eligibility rules and procedures. Review PSLs existing volunteer lawyer services programs and opportunities. Step 1: Attend orientation, training and observe intake procedures. Step 2: Meet with Volunteer Lawyer Program coordinators serving Lake and McHenry Counties and project supervisor and telephone counseling supervisors to develop more in-depth understanding of organization services. Step 3: Review with supervisor and pro bono staff potential and possible strategies for involving corporate legal staff into project to enhance pro bono delivery of legal services to persons with disabilities.		Start date to 10/31/2011 By 10/31/2011 By 10/31/2011 By 10/31/2011
Activity 2 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:		Activity 2 Completed (date): _____

Project STAR**VISTA**

<p>Activity 3: Prepare program and volunteer recruitment plan</p> <p>Step 1: Identify target areas for volunteer work and qualification for volunteers</p> <p>Step 2: Review plan with project supervisors and other staff working on this project.</p> <p>Step 3: Develop Recruitment and Training Plan and materials including training handbook</p>	<p>11/1/2011-12/31/2011</p> <p>11/1/2011-11/30/2011</p> <p>11/15/2011-12/31/2011</p> <p>11/15/2011-12/31/2011</p>
<p>Activity 3 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:</p>	<p>Activity 3 Completed (date):</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>Activity 4: Recruit and train volunteers</p> <p>Step 1: In coordination with PSLS Volunteer Lawyer Program Coordinator initiate volunteer recruitment with aim at least 5 volunteers over grant year</p> <p>Step 2: Coordinate the training of volunteers</p> <p>Step 3: Coordinate the linkage of clients to volunteer services and continue as Resource for volunteers.</p> <p>Step 4: Survey volunteers and participants about strengths and weaknesses of the experience to improve program</p> <p>Step 5. Prepare report and recommendation on survey results and other input on program</p>	<p>1/1/2012-5/30/2012</p> <p>1/1/2012-3//30/2012</p> <p>04/01/2012-04/30/2012</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>30 days following training</p> <p>5/01/2012-5/31/2012</p>
<p>Activity 4 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:</p>	<p>Activity 4 Completed (date):</p> <p>_____</p>

AmeriCorps*VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)

SAMPLE

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VISTA Project: Community Legal Services Expansion and Impact Project		VISTA Member Name:	
Site Name: Kane County Foreclosure Mediation Project	Assignment Area:	Kane County Illinois	Date: August 2, 2010

Goal (from VISTA Project Plan): To help low income residents to obtain the legal information and legal services needed to resolve problems impacting their ability to meet their basic human needs, the VISTA project will develop a sustainable plan utilizing new partnerships for outreach and creating a volunteer recruitment and management system for Prairie State Legal Services (PSLS).	
Activity 1: Conduct Initial Planning and Groundwork for Implementing A Foreclosure Mediation Program in Kane County, Illinois Step 1: Analyze plans and protocols for the recently adopted foreclosure mediation programs in Cook and Will Counties Step 2: Observe the operation of the Cook and Will County foreclosure mediation programs Step 3: Meet with Judges in Kane County to plan implementation of project in Kane County	August 2-6 August 4-13 August 2-13
Activity 1 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:	Activity 1 Completed (date): _____
Activity 2: Prepare Mortgage Foreclosure Mediation Program Plan Step 1: Prepare initial draft plan, submit to supervisor, then to judges Step 2: Obtain feedback and suggestions from judges Step 3: Meet with key participant groups as suggested by judges to review plan Step 4: Revise plan and resubmit to judges for approval	August 13-Sept. 1 Sept. 1 – Sept. 15 August 13-Sept. 30 Oct. 1-15
Activity 2 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:	Activity 2 Completed (date): _____

Project STAR

VISTA

Activity 3: Prepare Materials/Protocols Needed to Implement Program Step 1: Identify the materials and protocols needed to implement program, prepare schedule for drafting and submitting the needed materials and protocols for review by judges Step 2: Suggested target to draft 50% of the required materials/protocols and submit to court for review Step 3: Draft remaining 50% of required materials/protocols and submit to court for review Step 4: Revise materials and protocols reviewed by court, resubmit for final approval	Sept. 15-Oct. 15 Oct. 15-30 Oct. 30-Nov. 15 Nov.15-30
Activity 3 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:	Activity 3 Completed (date): _____
Activity 4: Prepare Plan and Materials to Recruit and Train Volunteers to Participate in the Program Step 1: Draft written plan for recruiting and training attorney volunteers and housing counselors submit to court for review Step 2: Prepare written training materials for volunteers to use, submit to court for review Step 3: Prepare final plan and materials for recruiting and training volunteers to participate in the program	Nov. 1-15 Nov. 15-30 Dec. 1-15
Activity 4 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:	Activity 4 Completed (date): _____

Activity 5: Recruit and Train Volunteers

Step 1: Recruit minimum number of volunteers needed to launch program	Dec. 1-31
Step 2: Conduct training of volunteers/obtain feedback on training	Jan. 1-14 2011
Step 3: Schedule volunteers for trial mediations in consultation with court	Jan. 7-14

Activity 5 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:	Activity 2 Completed (date): _____
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Activity 6: Implement Mortgage Foreclosure Mediation Program

Step 1: Develop Initial Mediation Schedules	Dec. 14-31 2010
Step 2: Staff schedule with volunteers	Jan. 14-28 2011
Step 3: Develop survey for tracking outcomes and for participant feedback	Jan. 2-14
Step 4: Launch program, continue to schedule and staff mediations, Recruit and train volunteers	Feb 2 – August 1

Activity 6 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:	Activity 2 Completed (date): _____
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Activity 7: Report on Implementation

Step 1: Draft report on initial implementation, submit to court

May 1 2011

Step 2: Review initial implementation and make appropriate revisions

June 30, 2011

Step 3: Prepare a guide to help future VISTA's/PSLS staff develop mediation programs
Elsewhere in the PSLS service area.

June 30-August 31

Activity7 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:

**Activity 2
Completed
(date):**

Financial Literacy VISTA VAD

<i>Column A</i> AmeriCorps*VISTA Project Plan – Financial Literacy VISTA	<i>Column B</i> Date(s)	<i>Column C</i>
<p>Community Need Statement: In a nation where nearly a third of high school seniors already use a credit card, a higher proportion have an ATM card, and more than 1.5 million families filed for personal bankruptcy last year, the need for financial literacy is apparent. Yet fewer than 30 percent of young Americans are given the opportunity to take as much as one week’s worth of course work in money management or personal finances in high school.</p> <p>GOAL 1: The Americorps VISTAs will assist in the formation of a coalition to improve and expand the provision of school based financial literacy in Illinois.</p> <p>Activities: The AmeriCorps*VISTA will participate in the following activities to assist the Shriver Center’s Asset Opportunity Unit with efforts to improve and expand the provision of school based financial literacy in Illinois.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engage in outreach to key stakeholders involved in school based financial literacy interested in participating in a coalition to improve and expand school based financial literacy in Illinois. 2. Convene meetings to establish a financial education coalition. 3. Prepare agendas and materials related to coalition meetings. 4. Develop an action plan and framework for systemic improvements in Illinois’ school based financial literacy initiatives. 5. Supervise sub-committees to implement the action plan’s activities. 	3 Years	

<p>Column A</p> <p>Goals and Objectives – Financial Literacy VISTA</p>	<p>Column B</p> <p>Date(s)</p>	<p>Column C</p>
<p>Output: (PERFORMANCE MEASURE): Outreach and coalition building among key stakeholders involved in school based financial literacy to form a coalition to improve and expand school based financial literacy in Illinois.</p> <p>Indicator: Number of contacts made.</p> <p>Target: Identify 15 organizations to participate in coalition.</p> <p>Instrument: The AmeriCorps*VISTA will communicate with key stakeholders about the importance of school based financial literacy and track organizations contacted.</p> <p>Intermediate Outcome (PERFORMANCE MEASURE): Convene meetings to establish a financial education coalition.</p> <p>Indicator: Number of organizations involved in coalition meetings and number of coalition meetings.</p> <p>Target: 10 organizations recruited to coalition and 3 meetings held.</p> <p>Instrument: The AmeriCorps*VISTA will engage in outreach and meetings with potential coalition members and track organizations recruited.</p>	<p>Q2 – Q4</p> <p>Q2 - Q4</p>	

<p>End Outcome (PERFORMANCE MEASURE): The development of a comprehensive, sustainable financial education program, including grade based standards and curriculum and service learning experiences, for all K-12 public schools in Illinois.</p> <p>Indicator: Supervise sub-committees to implement the action plan's activities.</p> <p>Target: Publication of 1 implementation plan for improving financial education in Illinois schools including pilot programs, evaluations, teacher training, resources, and partnerships, and legislation to improve the financial literacy rates of Illinois children</p> <p>Instrument: The AmeriCorps*VISTA will organize and coordinate a coalition and sub-committees to develop a comprehensive financial education plan for all Illinois schools and archive plan materials as appropriate.</p>	Q4	

<i>Column A</i> AmeriCorps*VISTA Project Plan – Healthy Futures VISTA	<i>Column B</i> Date(s)	<i>Column C</i>
<p>Community Need Statement: When President Obama signed health reform into law, a massive, immensely important work load was delivered to federal and state officials, the medical community, and health policy experts and advocates. The timeline for that work is long, with reforms having effective dates and systems implementation dates stretching from March 2010 to January 2014 and beyond.</p> <p>Goal: The AmeriCorps*VISTA member will work to ensure that policymakers, advocates and community service providers understand the new laws and that they are implemented in a way that maximizes their benefits to low-income people.</p>	<p>3 Years</p>	
<p>Activities:</p> <p>An AmeriCorps*VISTA member will participate in the following activities to assist the Shriver Center’s health policy projects.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Research the new health reform laws to help Shriver Center staff develop a clear understanding of the laws. 2. Assist in the preparation of a report summarizing the health reform laws. 3. Conduct outreach to policymakers, advocates and community agencies that interact with low-income people who are impacted by health reform laws. 4. Develop information and training materials to share with policymakers, advocates and community organizations. 5. Conduct outreach, research and informational efforts involving other health care projects of the Shriver Center aimed at improving coverage, access and quality of care. 		
<p>(Outputs and outcomes listed on next page)</p>		

Column A	Column B	Column C
Goals and Objectives – Healthy Futures VISTA	Date(s)	
<p>Output: (PERFORMANCE MEASURE): Research on the new health reform laws conducted and 5 fact sheets prepared summarizing findings</p> <p>Indicator: Number of fact sheets prepared</p> <p>Target: 5</p> <p>Instrument: The VISTA member will conduct research and generate fact sheets summarizing health reform laws.</p>	Q2 – Q3	
<p>Intermediate Outcome (PERFORMANCE MEASURE): Assist the Shriver Center in producing a report summarizing the new health reform laws</p> <p>Indicator: Number of reports generated</p> <p>Target: 1</p> <p>Instrument: The Americorps*VISTA member will assist the Shriver Center and its partners in generating a report on the health reform laws.</p>	Q3-Q4	
<p>End Outcome (PERFORMANCE MEASURE): Policymakers, advocates and community service providers better understand the new health reform laws</p> <p>Indicator: Number of communications or training opportunities offered</p> <p>Target: 10</p> <p>Instrument: The AmeriCorps*VISTA member will log outreach efforts and any related trainings.</p>	Q3-Q4	

<i>Column A</i> AmeriCorps*VISTA Project Plan –Training Programs VISTA	<i>Column B</i> Date(s)	<i>Column C</i>
Goal: The Training Programs VISTA will support the efforts of the Shriver Center’s new Training Programs Department to provide education and training programs which build the capacity of the nation’s equal justice advocates to obtain justice for their clients.	3 Years	
Activities: An AmeriCorps*VISTA member will participate in the following activities to assist the Shriver Center’s training efforts: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide logistical support needed to organize, recruit and deliver expanded portfolio of national training programs 2. Develop, compile and disseminate marketing and training materials 3. Populate constituent database with training program participant prospects and website with training program information 4. Conduct surveys of training program participants to evaluate impact of training on their efforts to obtain justice for their clients 		
(Outputs and outcomes listed on next page)		

VISTA Assignment Description

Template

A VISTA Assignment Description (VAD) can be designed in many different ways; you can use any model that works well for your project. This sample VAD, developed by Project STAR, can be modified to meet your needs.

VISTA Project: Access to Justice		VISTA Member Name:
Site Name: <u>The Watsonville Law Center</u>	Assignment Area: Watsonville, CA	Date: November 18, 2011

VISTA Member Activities and Steps Checklist	Planned Period of Work
Goal (<i>Build Capacity through Collaborative and Partnership Development and Outreach and Education</i>):	
Activity 1: Understand and develop Systems for Partnership and Collaborative Management Step 1: Understand substantive content related to collaboratives Step 2: Understand purpose and strategies of partnerships Step 3: Continue to implement management systems, tools and software	
Activity 1 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:	Activity 1 Completed (date): __03/12
Activity 2: Develop Collaborative Leadership and Management Step 1: Obtain training in Collaborative Leadership Step 2: Identify and institute tasks and duties involved in collaboration management. Step 3: Maintain Collaborative binders with descriptions, tools, templates and resources Step 4: Track Progress of Collaboratives.	
Activity 2 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:	Activity 2 Completed (date): __06/12__
Activity 3: Evaluation Plan Step 1: Develop evaluations for collaborative management by collaborative partners. Step 2: Distribute collect and analyze data from evaluations Step 3: Evaluate effectiveness of collaborative management and document recommendations for improvement.	
Activity 3 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:	Activity 2 Completed (date): __09/12__
Activity 4: Develop and Institute Outreach and Education. Step 1: Develop Materials as necessary in English and Spanish. Step 2: Develop Networks of Target Audiences. Step 3: Evaluate Effectiveness of Outreach.	
Activity 4 Comments/Summary of Accomplishments:	Activity 3 Completed (date): __011/12__

I have read and agree to work on the activities described above:

_____ Date

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VISTA Project: Access to Justice		VISTA Member Name:	
Site Name: The Watsonville Law Center		Assignment Area: Watsonville, CA	
Date: July 25, 2011			
Goal <i>Build Capacity through Collaborative and Partnership Development and Outreach and Education:</i>			
Activity 1: Understand and develop Systems for Partnership and Collaborative Management Step 1: Understand substantive content related to collaboratives Step 2: Understand purpose and strategies of partnerships Step 3: Continue to implement management systems, tools and software			
Activity 2: Develop Collaborative Leadership and Management Step 1: Obtain training in Collaborative Leadership Step 2: Identify and institute tasks and duties involved in collaboration management. Step 3: Maintain Collaborative binders with descriptions, tools, templates and resources Step 4: Track Progress of Collaboratives.			
Activity 3: Evaluation Plan Step 1: Develop evaluations for collaborative management by collaborative partners. Step 2: Distribute collect and analyze data from evaluations Step 3: Evaluate effectiveness of collaborative management and document recommendations for improvement.			
Activity 4: Develop and Institute Outreach, Education and Marketing. Step 1: Develop written, web and social networking materials as necessary in English and Spanish. Step 2: Identify Target Audiences, Schedule and Carry Out Opportunities for Press and Presentations. Step 3: Evaluate Effectiveness of Outreach.			

I have read and agree to work on the activities described above:

_____ Date