

## Program Overview & Requirements

*Pennsylvania Campus Compact  
AmeriCorps\*VISTA Program 2013-2014*

### Overview of AmeriCorps\*VISTA Program

AmeriCorps\*VISTA (Volunteers In Service To America) is a national service program that, for more than 40 years, has been at the forefront of building the capacity of communities to fight poverty. VISTA members devote a year or more of their lives to challenge poverty's root causes. They do this by mobilizing community volunteers and local resources, and by increasing the capacity of people in low-income communities to rely on themselves. To achieve its program purpose, VISTA operates under the following core principles:

1. **Anti-Poverty Focus** –The purpose of the VISTA Program is to support efforts to fight poverty. Any nonprofit organization, educational institution, tribal or public agency with a program that is poverty-related in scope can apply to sponsor a VISTA project. The project's goal addresses helping individuals and communities out of poverty, not simply making poverty more tolerable through short-term services.
2. **Capacity-Building** – VISTA members work to increase the capacity of organizations to fight poverty, rather than providing direct services to low-income individuals. Through activities such as fundraising, establishment of community volunteer management systems, volunteer recruitment and management, community outreach, and collaborative development, VISTA members mobilize local resources to achieve lasting solutions.
3. **Community Empowerment** – Sponsoring organizations ensure that the project engages residents of the low-income communities in planning, developing, and implementing the project. The project must be responsive and relevant to the lives of the community residents, and should tap into inherent community strengths.
4. **Sustainable Solutions** – VISTA members are a short-term resource to help sponsoring organizations address a new or existing program area related to their mission. AmeriCorps\*VISTA members help build the capacity of an organization to implement its anti-poverty program on its own after three years, as sponsoring organizations plan for the eventual phase-out of VISTA member support.

For more information visit: [www.vista.gov](http://www.vista.gov).

### Project Focus Areas & Goals For the PACC\*VISTA Program

All PACC\*VISTA projects for 2013-2014 will focus in one of the following areas:

1. **EDUCATION: Improving academic achievement of at-risk K-12 students:** Projects in this area can include any in or out-of-school tutoring or mentoring program for academically and economically at-risk K-12 students. While projects in this area will have many outcomes, increased academic engagement of students and the number of students proficient in core subjects will be directly measured. Additionally, **priority will be given** to projects that partner with underperforming schools and/or recipients of Title I School Improvement Grants from the Department of Education.
2. **EDUCATION: Increasing college access of at-risk high school students:** Projects in this area can include any in or out-of-school tutoring, mentoring, or college access program for economically at-risk high school students. While projects in this area will have many outcomes, increased interest in attending college and increased post-secondary attendance rates will be directly measured. Additionally, **priority will be given** to projects that partner with underperforming schools and/or recipients of Title I School Improvement Grants from the Department of Education, as well a projects that increase college access for veterans.
3. **HEALTHY FUTURES: Increasing Food Access for low-income families:** Projects in this area can include any food access program, ranging from food banks or food pantries to food reclamation projects, for low-income families. While projects in this area will have many outcomes, increased access to food and a decrease in household spending on food will be directly measured.



4. HEALTHY FUTURES: Increasing Access to Health Care for low-income families: Projects in this area can include various health services programs, ranging from support in acquiring health services or health insurance to providing health services and supporting health clinics. It is important that all projects provide access for low-income families. While projects in this area will have many outcomes, increased access to health services and a decrease in household spending on health services will be directly measured.
5. ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY: Increasing Employment Access for unemployed or under-employed individuals: Projects in this area can include various employment services, ranging from skill and job trainings, resume/portfolio development to job search process and employment placements. It is important that all projects provide support for unemployed or underemployed individuals. While projects in this area will have many outcomes, increased job skills and the placement of jobs will be directly measured.
6. ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY: Increasing Financial Literacy for low-income families: Projects in this area can include various financial literacy concepts, ranging from budgeting and long-term financial planning to tax support and general financial literacy. It is important that all projects provide support for low-income families. While projects in this area will have many outcomes, increased financial literacy and increased financial stability will be directly measured.
7. ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY: Increasing Housing Access for low-income families: Projects in this area can include various housing projects, ranging from developing and/or repairing healthy, safe, and affordable housing units, to making accommodations to make housing accessible to people with disabilities. It is important that all projects provide support for low-income families and may include homeless individuals. While projects in this area will have many outcomes, increased individuals receiving housing accommodations and who are placed in safe, healthy, and affordable housing will be directly measured.

All PACC\*VISTA projects are designed with a three-year timeline in order to support sustainability. However, campuses are required to **reapply each year** through a competitive process.

The project and PACC\*VISTA member’s work must explicitly address the following three PACC\*VISTA program goals:

1. To develop or enhance campus-community efforts to address one of the identified project focus areas;
2. To create, develop, or sustain reciprocal, mutually beneficial partnerships between the campus and community organizations, leaders, and members;
3. To foster PACC\*VISTA members as professionals and emerging leaders in the fields of community development, civic engagement, and/or higher education.

### Program Requirements

The following section outlines the requirements and expectation of PACC\*VISTA members, host campuses, and Pennsylvania Campus Compact, with regard to the PACC\*VISTA Program. This information will be outlined in a Host Site Agreement that all accepted host campuses will be required to complete.

#### PACC\*VISTA members will:

- Build capacity for communities to ameliorate issues related to low-income communities and poverty;
- Commit to serving as a full-time VISTA for one year (if the VISTA leaves prior to one year, even at the beginning of the year, the site will not receive another VISTA for that year);
- Have a college degree or three years of related volunteer experience;
- Receive an annual living allowance of approximately \$11,352 (\$12,312 in Philadelphia), health coverage, and a relocation allowance and childcare benefits, depending on eligibility (PACC and CNCS cover these costs);
- Receive a post-service education award of \$5,550 OR a \$1,500 cash stipend upon completion of year of service (PACC and CNCS cover these costs);
- Attend a five-day pre-service orientation in July or August (dates to be set by time of recruitment)



- Attend PACC\*VISTA retreats and participate in other training events as outlined at the beginning of the term of service;
- Participate in national days of service including Martin Luther King Day, National Volunteer Week, Youth Service Day, and Make a Difference Day;
- Be available for service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

**PACC\*VISTA Members are prohibited from:**

- Full or part-time employment while serving as VISTA members;
- Receiving supplemental allowances or compensation for work from a host site outside of project-sponsored housing and/or meal plans;
- Taking on responsibilities at their host campus outside of their VISTA Assignment Description (VAD) or duties that supplant those of a full-time staff member;
- Supervising full-time or part-time staff or other AmeriCorps Members, including college students serving as AmeriCorps members;
- Participating in: 1). Partisan and non-partisan political activities, including voter registration; 2). Direct or indirect attempts to influence passage or defeat of legislation; 3). Labor or anti-labor organization or related activities; 4). Religious instruction, worship services, proselytization, or any other religious activity as an official part of their duties;
- Providing direct service to the community;
- Other activities as outlined in the Terms & Conditions of the VISTA Member Handbook, which can be found at: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/help/vistahandbook/chapter1.html>.

**PACC\*VISTA Host Campuses must:**

- Be members of the Pennsylvania Campus Compact (PACC);
- Provide PACC with a Program Fee of \$5,000.00 to support the PACC\*VISTA Program;
- Attend a mandatory VISTA Supervisor meeting on Tuesday, February 26, 2013 from 9am to 3pm in Harrisburg, PA
- Recruit their own PACC\*VISTA member;
- Provide daily supervision of the PACC\*VISTA member with weekly one-on-one “check-ins”;
- Keep written documentation of PACC\*VISTA member's time-off
- Provide in-depth on-site orientation and training for their incoming PACC\*VISTA members at the beginning of their service;
- Provide related ongoing training for the PACC\*VISTA member;
- Provide work space, access to computer equipment and email, and relevant supplies;
- Provide on-the-job transportation for AmeriCorps\*VISTA members;
- Sign a host campus agreement with PACC;
- Submit bi-annual progress reports to PACC, including reporting on **all required performance measures**;
- Allow the member to work on PACC service initiatives such as Martin Luther King Day of Service;
- Identify service focus objectives and assist the member in developing a project timeline to achieve objectives;
- Aid the member with identifying and working with local, low-income communities;
- To consult with and use the people of the community to be served by the PACC\*VISTA member in planning, developing, and implementing the project, to the maximum extent possible;
- Convene an Advisory Council, of at least 51% of its members from the low-income community, **before the project begins** in August 2012 to guide the AmeriCorps\*VISTA project. The Advisory Council **cannot** be developed **after the fact** or be the responsibility of the AmeriCorps\*VISTA member. The role of the Advisory Council will be:
  1. To review and provide written comments concerning any project application prior to the submission of the application. A copy of such comments shall accompany the application;
  2. To meet with the staff of the host campus at periodic intervals, but no less than twice per year, to review and comment on the development and implementation of the project. Such project review and commentary should be directed toward the adequacy of the project to meet the identified needs of the project beneficiaries;
  3. To submit, if it chooses, written reports and/or copies of minutes of its meetings to Pennsylvania Campus Compact to accompany Progress Reports;
  4. To meet with Pennsylvania Campus Compact staff as appropriate during annual site visits.

- Relieve the PACC\*VISTA member of duties so the he/she can attend PACC/CNCS training/retreats;
- Provide copies media coverage of events or articles that feature campus-community collaboration related to the PACC\*VISTA's work;
- Assist the PACC\*VISTA member to find safe, appropriate, affordable housing during their term of service.

**PACC and CNCS will:**

- Provide Pre-Service Orientation (PSO) for the PACC\*VISTA member;
- Provide at least two professional development retreats for the PACC\*VISTA member during their term of service;
- Provide oversight and coordination of the PACC\*VISTA program through AmeriCorps Program Director;
- Visit sites annually to assist campuses in self-assessing their progress towards VISTA Assignment Description (VAD) Goals and Performance Measures;
- Provide other technical assistance as needed to campus projects and VISTA members;
- Provide one-on-one and joint coaching and conflict mediation for host site supervisors and PACC\*VISTA members;
- Assist campuses with recruitment and enrollment of PACC\*VISTA members;
- Manage health coverage and payroll for VISTA members.

**2013 Timeline:**

December 3, 2012	Host campus applications due via email to <a href="mailto:acprice@paccompact.org">acprice@paccompact.org</a>
December 17 - January 2, 2013	Host campus applicants responsible for responding to any application revisions and/or questions
Mid January 2013	Host campuses selected and notified
February 26, 2013	Mandatory Host Campus Supervisor Meeting at Messiah College
Mid-May, 2013	Host campuses notify PACC of selected PACC*VISTA member*
July 12, 2013	Program fee from host campus due to PACC
July 2013	Pre-Service Orientation for new PACC*VISTA members*
July 2013	New PACC*VISTA members start year of service on host campuses*

(\*Dates to be set by time of recruitment)