

# AmeriCorps VISTA

CFDA: 94.013

**Administering Federal Agency:** Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) [now operating as AmeriCorps](#)

**Description:** 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. Any public, private, or faith-based nonprofit organization, educational institution, or public agency may sponsor a VISTA. The VISTA program is guided by four core principles: anti-poverty, community engagement, capacity building, and sustainable solutions.

“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, such as expanded volunteer recruiting activities, developing new volunteer programs, enhancing website content and functions, drafting and disseminating information for court users, and more.

Note: Although applications to sponsor VISTA members are made through AmeriCorps, it is included in this database of state-administered federal funds because of the technical assistance state-level AmeriCorps commission staff can provide and because courts and legal aid programs can partner with local or state government agencies to become a sponsoring organization.

**Find your state/local administrator:** AmeriCorps provides contact information for states-specific staff [here](#).

**How do you apply?** Applicants submit a brief Concept Paper through eGrants, the AmeriCorps online application and reporting system. Concept papers are reviewed four times throughout the year. Organizations submitting accepted concept papers will be invited to submit a full application. The latest VISTA priorities, concept paper and application process links, deadlines, and other guidance and resources are available [here](#). AmeriCorps federal and state commission staff can answer questions and provide technical assistance throughout the project development process.

**Potential uses:** AmeriCorps VISTA priority areas include:

- Economic Opportunity
- Healthy Futures
- Education
- Veterans and Military Families
- Environmental Stewardship
- Priority Populations: Rural Communities, Indian Country, and areas of deep poverty.
- Additional priority consideration for projects that work in the above areas and populations that address issues of racial equity

Legal aid providers, sometimes with a court partner, have used VISTAs to launch, strengthen, or expand programs that increase civil access to justice.

- Recruit volunteer attorneys, law students, and/or non-legal volunteers
- Develop and enhance technology resources, including informational materials or websites
- Conduct studies and/or surveys
- Network and/or develop partnerships with hospitals, schools, public agencies, or other service providers
- Supporting/developing technology tools

### Other Helpful Information:

- There are extensive resources to assist with the application process located here. It is highly recommended that applicants join the frequently offered training and technical assistance Calls & Webinars posted [here](#) and contact the state CNCS office for guidance before completing the concept paper. [DOJ's Guide to the AmeriCorps VISTA Program for Legal Aid Organizations](#) highlights key components of the AmeriCorps VISTA program for legal aid organizations.
- In a January 2020 [SRLN webinar](#) on "Funding Sources for Court-based Navigator Programs," Nicole Claro-Quinn (California), Stacey Weiler (Illinois) and Meghan Scott (Montana) discussed the ins and outs of using AmeriCorps funding and provided helpful tips for others considering tapping this resource.