

VISTA Focus Group Questions

Single-site sponsors and sub-site supervisors

1. How does VISTA's presence affect your organization's ability to build capacity or achieve its project goals?
 - a. How and to what extent do you see your VISTA project as addressing poverty?
2. How do you define a successful VISTA project? What are some of the barriers to VISTA project success? What about facilitators to success?
3. Were you involved in the initial development of your VISTA project?
 - a. If so, how did you develop your VISTA project?
 - i. What do you think are the most important steps when designing or developing a VISTA project?
 - ii. How did you identify the community need? How did you develop your VISTA project in a way that met the needs of the community?
 - iii. How and to what extent were stakeholders and community leaders involved in designing the VISTA project?
 - b. What steps do you take to develop or improve your VISTA project?
 - i. How do you develop your project in a way that meets the needs of the community?
4. What steps has your organization taken to improve VISTA project sustainability?
 - a. If you were advising another VISTA sponsor on how to improve VISTA project sustainability, what would you recommend?
5. What VISTA resources, if any, have been most useful in planning and managing VISTA projects? For example, this could include materials such as the sponsor handbook or online resources from the VISTA campus. This can also include trainings or technical assistance from the VISTA State or Regional Office, or other forms of help from people such as VISTA leaders or other VISTA sponsors.
 - a. What are the biggest gaps in knowledge that VISTA may be able to address with new training materials or other resources?
 - b. Are there any resources created by your organization specifically for VISTA that have been especially useful? If so, please describe them.
 - i. What about non-VISTA resources?
 - c. Do you prefer self-directed or person-led learning?
 - i. What formats do you prefer for self-directed learning? For example, do you prefer instructional videos, blog posts, training manuals, recorded webinars, podcasts, or other formats? What formats do you prefer for sharing information with VISTA members or others?
6. What steps does your organization take when onboarding a new VISTA member?
 - a. Does your organization have on-site orientation and training (OSOTs) for new VISTA members?
 - i. If so, what does it look like? How did you design this training? How do you manage it?
 - ii. If not, why not?

- iii. How important are on-site trainings to the success of projects? How important are they to the experience of VISTA members?
- 7. What, in your opinion, is the purpose of a VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)?
 - a. What role do VADs play in the success of VISTA projects? What role do they play in the VISTA member experience?
 - b. How specifically do you use the VADs? For example, do you review them periodically with the VISTA members?
- 8. Who recruits VISTA members? What do you believe are the biggest challenges to recruiting VISTA members? What has been most useful to you in overcoming recruiting challenges?
 - a. If you were advising a VISTA sponsor who was struggling with recruitment, what best practices would you recommend?
 - b. What kind of advertising or marketing activities can CNCS implement to strengthen nationwide recruiting?
 - c. How would you describe VISTA projects to another person in your field who has never heard of VISTA?
- 9. What do you believe are the biggest challenges to retaining VISTA members? What has been most useful to you in overcoming these challenges?
 - a. If you were advising a VISTA sponsor who was struggling with retention, what best practices would you recommend?
- 10. What question didn't we ask that you wish we did?

Intermediary and multi-site sponsors

- 1. How does VISTA's presence affect your organization's and your sub-site's organizations ability to build capacity or achieve its goals?
 - a. How and to what extent do you see your VISTA project as addressing poverty?
- 2. For this question, we will first ask about VISTA projects in terms of individual sub-site projects, then we will ask about your VISTA project overall. First, how you define a successful VISTA project for your sub-sites? What are some of the barriers to VISTA project success? What about facilitators to success?
 - a. Next, how do you define success for your organization's overall VISTA efforts? What are some of the barriers to success? What about facilitators to success?
- 3. Were you involved in the initial development of your overall VISTA project?
 - a. If so, how did you develop your VISTA project?
 - i. What do you think are the most important steps when designing or developing a VISTA intermediary or multi-site projects?
 - ii. How and to what extent were stakeholders and community leaders involved in designing the overall VISTA project?
 - b. What do you think are the most important steps when designing, developing, or improving sub-site projects?
 - i. How do your sub-sites develop projects that meet the needs of their community?
- 4. What steps has your organization taken to improve VISTA project sustainability?

- a. If you were advising another VISTA sponsor on how to improve VISTA project sustainability, what would you recommend?
5. What VISTA resources, if any, have been most useful in planning and managing VISTA projects? For example, this could include materials such as the sponsor handbook or online resources from the VISTA campus. This can also include trainings or technical assistance from the VISTA State or Regional Office, or other forms of help from people such as VISTA leaders or other VISTA sponsors.
 - a. What are the biggest gaps in knowledge that VISTA may be able to address with new training materials or other resources?
 - b. Are there any resources created by your organization specifically for VISTA that have been especially useful? If so, please describe them.
 - i. What about non-VISTA resources?
 - c. Do you prefer self-directed or person-led learning?
 - i. What formats do you prefer for self-directed learning? For example, do you prefer instructional videos, blog posts, training manuals, recorded webinars, podcasts, or other formats? What formats do you prefer for sharing information with VISTA members or sub-site supervisors?
6. What steps does your organization take when onboarding a new VISTA member?
 - a. Do your sub-sites have on-site orientation and training (OSOTs) for new VISTA members?
 - i. If so, what does it look like? How did you design this training? How do you manage it?
 - ii. If not, why not?
 - iii. How important are on-site trainings to the success of projects? How important are they to the experience of VISTA members?
 - b. In addition to OSOTs provided at sub-sites, does your organization provide any training directly to VISTA members? If so, what does this look like?
 - c. Do you provide any training to new sub-sites supervisors? If so, what does this look like?
7. What, in your opinion, is the purpose of a VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)?
 - a. What role do VADs play in the success of VISTA projects? What role do they play in the VISTA member experience?
 - b. How specifically do you use the VADs? For example, do you or your sub-site supervisors review them periodically with the VISTA members?
8. Who recruits VISTA members? What do you believe are the biggest challenges to recruiting VISTA members? What has been most useful to you in overcoming recruiting challenges?
 - a. If you were advising a VISTA sponsor who was struggling with recruitment, what best practices would you recommend?
 - b. What kind of advertising or marketing activities can CNCS implement to strengthen nationwide recruiting?
 - c. How would you describe VISTA projects to another person in your field who has never heard of VISTA?
9. What do you believe are the biggest challenges to retaining VISTA members? What has been most useful to you in overcoming these challenges?

- a. If you were advising a VISTA sponsor who was struggling with retention, what best practices would you recommend?
10. What question didn't we ask that you wish we did?