

VISTA Sponsor Survey

Description of the Survey and Participants' Rights

You are invited to participate in a survey that will explore the views and experience of VISTA sponsors. The survey is being conducted by JBS International Inc, a research organization, on behalf of the Corporation for National and Community Service. We are asking for your consent to participate in the survey.

How long will the survey last? The survey should take about 25 minutes to complete.

Benefits and Risks: There may be no direct benefits to you for participating in this research project. The survey will help CNCS increase their knowledge and understanding of the VISTA portfolio to inform program improvements.

Confidentiality and Privacy: Your personally identifiable information (PII) will not be stored or linked to additional information about you. CNCS may link additional administrative data about the VISTA sponsoring organization and project to the survey responses. The data will (a) always be stored in a safe and secure manner and (b) only be used for research and/or statistical purposes. Any responses that you share will not be used to make decisions related to your VISTA project. Information will only be shared with CNCS staff and external parties who require it to complete their work. Data will not be disclosed to the general public in any form that would identify you. When reporting the findings, your responses will be combined with the responses of other participants and reported in the aggregate.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in the study is voluntary. You can choose freely to participate or not to participate. At any point, you can stop participating without any adverse consequences to your organization. Your participation or choice not to participate will not impact any CNCS decisions about your VISTA program.

Do you agree to participate in this survey?

- a. Yes [PROCEED TO QUESTION 1]
- b. No [END SURVEY]

Section I: Role

The first two questions in this survey will ask you about your role with the VISTA project.

1. Which of the following most closely describes your title in your VISTA project?

- a. **Project Director:** A staff person who has been assigned by the sponsor the overall responsibility for the management of the VISTA project. Project Directors are responsible for executing all aspects of the project as outlined by the sponsor. This includes reporting, grant management (if applicable), and Memorandum of Agreement (MA) management. The Project Director may also serve as a Site Supervisor or VISTA supervisor.
- b. **Site Supervisor:** Provides direct day-to-day supervision of one or more VISTA members in a single site project. This includes providing training and professional development for VISTA members. Someone else in your organization serves as the Project Director.
- c. **VISTA Supervisor:** Provides day-to-day supervision of VISTA members at one site of a multi-site project. This includes training and professional development for VISTA members. Someone else, in your organization or another organization, serves as the Project Director.
- d. Other (please specify): _____

2. Have you done any of the following? [Select all that apply]

- a. Written or helped write a Concept Paper or application for VISTA resources
- b. Created or helped create a VISTA assignment description (VAD)
- c. Engaged in recruitment or selection of VISTA applicants
- d. Directly supervised a VISTA member
- e. Completed or contributed to the VISTA project progress report
- f. Completed a VISTA sponsor verification form
- g. Coordinated meetings and support for VISTA members
- h. Engaged project beneficiaries in the VISTA project
- i. Created and used an eGrants account for the VISTA project
- j. Created and used a My AmeriCorps portal account for the VISTA project
- k. Other (please specify): _____
- l. None of the above
- m. Choose not to answer

Section II: Project Development

The following section asks how your VISTA project was developed and your involvement in developing it.

3. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about your VISTA project goals: [Response options for each statement: strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree, don't know, choose not to respond]

- a. Our VISTA project goals are closely aligned with our organization's mission.
- b. Our VISTA project goals are aimed at efforts to reduce or eliminate poverty or poverty-related problems.
- c. Our VISTA project is designed to meet the specific needs of the community.
- d. Our VISTA project worked with the community to identify goals for the project.
- e. Our VISTA project worked with the community to design the project.
- f. There is a clear connection between VISTA project goals and member VADs.

4. What are your top three practices for developing VISTA projects?

- a. Engaging community leaders and stakeholders in developing or updating the project
- b. Collecting data to assess community needs and/or project performance
- c. Incorporating feedback from VISTA members at the end of the service year to inform the following year
- d. Working with the VISTA State or Regional Office to design or improve project
- e. Discussing VISTA project development with other experienced VISTA supervisors
- f. Reviewing VISTA materials and resources (e.g., VISTA Campus, webinars)
- g. Ensuring organizational support and alignment with long-term goals
- h. Other (please specify): _____

- i. None of the above
- j. Choose not to answer

5. Were you involved in the initial development of your VISTA project?

- a. Yes[GO TO QUESTION 6]
- b. No [GO TO QUESTION 8]

6. Which of the following people were involved in developing your VISTA project? [Select all that apply]

- a. Community leaders (e.g., policy makers, coalition leaders) or stakeholders [GO to Q7]
- b. Potential project beneficiaries [GO to Q7]
- c. Our organization's director or top official [GO to Q8]
- d. Staff members or volunteers who will work directly with VISTA members [GO to Q8]
- e. Our multi-site director (for site supervisors) or site supervisors (for multi-site project directors) [GO to Q8]
- f. None of the above [GO to Q8]
- g. Other (please specify): _____ [GO to Q8]
- h. Choose not to answer [GO to Q8]

7. What did you do to ensure community members and beneficiaries were involved? [Select all that apply]

- a. Used an asset-based approach to recognize communities' existing strengths.
- b. Treated community members as the experts in their own contexts.
- c. Provided a mechanism for inclusive community input (e.g., surveys, focus groups, forums, working-groups, meetings).

- d. Built collective identify through a culture-led community effort.
- e. Used intervention strategies that were contextually and culturally relevant.
- f. Fostered a shared vision of common goals.
- g. Mobilized existing resources, people, and partnerships.
- h. Engaged in participatory decision-making.
- i. Placed local leaders in leadership roles on the project.
- j. Focused on facilitating community-based strategies for community learning.
- k. Other (please specify):
- l. None of the above.
- m. Choose not to answer.

Section III: Project Management

This section asks about the management of your VISTA project, including assessment of VISTA members' success and orientation for VISTA members.

8. What are your top three indicators of project success?

- a. Achieving CNCS project performance measures and/or goals as stated in the VISTA project application
- b. Achieving goals and objectives as stated in the VAD
- c. Increasing fundraising, resource mobilization, volunteer recruitment, and/or community partnerships
- d. Achieving visible impact in the community
- e. Improving documentation and evaluation
- f. Enhancing sustainability and enabling projects to continue after the VISTA member leaves
- g. VISTA member satisfaction and/or professional development
- h. Maintaining connections with VISTA members post-service, such as having VISTAs recommit to additional service or hiring VISTAs on staff
- i. Successful recruitment or placement
- j. Successful retention
- k. Other (please specify): _____
- l. None of the above
- m. Choose not to answer

9. What are your top three practices for successfully managing VISTA projects?

- a. Open communication, including regular meetings between the VISTA member and supervisor
- b. Regular review and adherence to the VISTA Assignment Description (VAD), including updating when needed
- c. Collecting and analyzing data related to project performance
- d. Ensuring that the skills and abilities of VISTA members match the tasks
- e. Proper vetting of potential VISTA members prior to service
- f. Having an effective on-site orientation
- g. CNCS-led trainings and resources (e.g., VISTA Sponsor Orientation)
- h. Multi-site sponsor-led training and resources for VISTA site supervisors
- i. Connecting VISTA members to other VISTAs, staff, or community members
- j. Using VISTA resources (e.g., supervisor manual, VISTA Campus)
- k. Ensuring VISTA member satisfaction (e.g., feeling valued, sufficient benefits, sees impact of work)
- l. Regular review and adherence to the vision outlined in the awarded project application
- m. Supporting continuity of organization staff involved with the project
- n. Community and/or beneficiary involvement in the project
- o. Other (please specify): _____
- p. None of the above
- q. Choose not to answer

10. What Covid-19 policy exceptions have been beneficial in managing your VISTA project? [Select all that apply]

- a. Teleservice
- b. Virtual orientation and training
- c. Emergency leave
- d. Early termination
- e. Other (please specify): _____
- f. None of the above
- g. Choose not to answer

11. Did you identify any best practices that helped your organization successfully manage VISTA projects during Covid-19?

- a. Yes, I identified one or more best practices (please describe—you may rely on any response options listed in the previous question) _____
- b. No, I did not find any practice that worked for managing a VISTA project during Covid-19
- c. Don't know, I'm still unsure of specific best practices for managing a VISTA project during Covid-19

12. Does your organization typically have on-site orientation and training for new VISTA members?

- a. Yes [GO TO QUESTION 13]

- b. No [GO TO QUESTION 15]

13. What elements are typically included in your organization's on-site orientation and training for new VISTA members? [Select all that apply]

- a. Required VISTA orientation tasks (e.g., oath, fingerprints, required webinars)
- b. Introduction of VISTA to staff members
- c. Introduction of VISTA to community members and/or project beneficiaries
- d. Personal goal setting, strength/values identification, planning, and/or reflection
- e. Specialized skills training (e.g., computer software, community outreach)
- f. Administrative training similar to that given to new staff (e.g., timesheets, safety protocols, sexual harassment training)
- g. VISTA-specific training (e.g., member benefits, reporting requirements)
- h. Discussion of the VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)
- i. Introduction to the neighborhood geography and/or transportation options
- j. Meetings with VISTA leader, other VISTAs, or former VISTAs
- k. Communication training/tasks (e.g., elevator speech, email signature)
- l. Opportunities for self-paced work (e.g., research, webinars)
- m. Forging relationships in the community
- n. Other (please specify): _____
- o. None of the above
- p. Choose not to answer

14. What are your top three elements for a successful on-site orientation and training at your project?

- a. Required VISTA orientation tasks (e.g. oath, fingerprints, required webinars)
- b. Introduction of VISTA to staff members
- c. Introduction of VISTA to community members and/or project beneficiaries
- d. Personal goal setting, strength/values identification, planning, and/or reflection
- e. Specialized skills training (e.g., computer software, community outreach)
- f. Administrative training similar to that given to new staff (e.g., timesheets, safety protocols, sexual harassment training)
- g. VISTA-specific training (e.g., member benefits, reporting requirements)
- h. Discussion of the VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)
- i. Introduction to the neighborhood geography and/or transportation options
- j. Meetings with VISTA leader, other VISTAs, or former VISTAs
- k. Communication training/tasks (e.g., elevator speech, email signature)
- l. Opportunities for self-paced work (e.g., research, webinars)
- m. Forging relationships in the community
- n. Other (please specify): _____
- o. None of the above
- p. Choose not to answer

15. Is your organization conducting orientation and training of new VISTA members in person, or are you completing these activities completely virtually during Covid-19?

- a. In person [GO TO Q17]
- b. Virtual [GO TO Q16]
- c. Both virtual and in-person [GO TO Q16]

16. What are up to three best practices or resources your organization used to successfully implement virtual VISTA member orientation and training?

- a. None
- b. Best Practice 1: _____
- c. Best Practice 2: _____
- d. Best Practice 3: _____

Section IV: Recruitment and Retention

This section asks about challenges you may have encountered with VISTA member recruitment and retention. This section also asks about the tools and strategies your project used for recruitment and retention of VISTA members.

17. What do you believe are the top three barriers to member recruitment?

- a. Receiving very few applications from qualified candidates
- b. Difficulties working in the CNCS member application portal
- c. Lack of general awareness about VISTA
- d. Candidates withdrawing their application or rejecting an offer
- e. VISTA living allowance
- f. Competitive job market
- g. Lack of flexibility (e.g., telework policy)
- h. Challenging location of organization (e.g., high cost of living, remote/rural)
- i. Timing of recruitment
- j. Insufficient health/mental health care coverage
- k. Lack of appeal of VISTA role in comparison to other opportunities
- l. No recruitment strategy
- m. Insufficient or no social media presence
- n. Other (please specify—if any barriers are related to Covid-19, please explain here):

- o. None of the above
- p. Choose not to answer

18. Has your organization faced any challenges retaining VISTA members in the last few years?

- a. Yes [GO TO QUESTION 19]
- b. No [GO TO QUESTION 20]

19. If you had challenges retaining VISTA members, what were the top three barriers to retention?

- a. VISTA(s) had performance issues
- b. VISTA(s) were dissatisfied with the project/organization
- c. Living allowance is too low
- d. VISTA member(s) left for another job
- e. Conflict between VISTA member and supervisor
- f. Insufficient benefits and/or health care or mental health care
- g. Overwork/burnout; emotionally challenging nature of work
- h. Disconnect between expectations and reality
- i. Challenges in VISTA member's personal life
- j. Lack of skills acquisition or career preparation
- k. Insufficient training
- l. Lack of connection or comradery with other VISTAs or staff
- m. Other (please specify—if any barriers are related to Covid-19, please explain here):

- n. None of the above
- o. Choose not to answer

20. What are your top three ways to successfully retain VISTA members?

- Effective supervision (e.g., regular check-ins and debriefs, open communication, accessibility, regular review of benchmarks, encouragement, conflict management)
- VISTA being able to see impact of work
- VISTA member's professional development or skills acquisition
- Working with VISTA members to help them settle into the community and access the resources or benefits offered in their community (e.g., housing, health care)
- The presence of a VISTA leader or other VISTA members
- Effective training

- Setting accurate expectations during recruitment
- Providing additional benefits (housing support, bus pass, etc.)
- Other (please specify—if your organization has successfully retained members during Covid-19, please explain here): _____
- None of the above
- Choose not to answer

21. Which recruitment tools or practices do you typically use? [Select all that apply]

- Having current or former VISTA members recruit new members
- Networking with local colleges, universities, or other institutions
- Career fairs
- Advertising (e.g., on LinkedIn, Indeed, Craigslist, Idealist)
- Our organization's social media marketing
- Informational webinars or application workshops
- Tools and resources on the Campus pages
- CNCS social media or other materials (e.g., brochures, videos, graphics, customizable fliers)
- AmeriCorps portal/eGrants
- Word of mouth
- Offering incentives to candidates (e.g., transportation support)
- Skype/Zoom/phone interviews for non-local recruits
- Training staff on recruitment strategies/techniques
- Other (please specify): _____
- None of the above
- Choose not to answer

22. If you could only use one recruitment tool or practice, which would it be?

- Having current or former VISTA members recruit new members
- Networking with local colleges, universities, or other institutions

- Career fairs
- Advertising (e.g., on LinkedIn, Indeed, Craigslist, Idealist)
- Our organization’s social media marketing
- Informational webinars or application workshops
- Tools and resources on the Campus pages
- CNCS social media or other materials (e.g., brochures, videos, graphics, customizable fliers)
- AmeriCorps portal/eGrants
- Word of mouth
- Offering incentives to candidates (e.g., transportation support)
- Skype/Zoom/phone interviews for non-local recruits
- Training staff on recruitment strategies/techniques
- Other (please specify): _____
- None of the above
- Choose not to answer

23. Is there a particular recruitment tool or practice that your organization successfully used during Covid-19?

- a. Yes (please describe the tool or practice—you may rely on any response options listed in the previous question) _____
- b. No, I did not find any tools or practices that worked for recruitment during Covid-19
- c. Don’t know, I’m still unsure of the utility of tools or practices my organization used for recruitment during Covid-19

Section V: Project Sustainability

This section asks about practices you believe are important to address challenges you face in ensuring VISTA project sustainability.

24. What practices do you and/or your VISTA member(s) implement to ensure that VISTA projects are sustainable? [Select all that apply]

- a. Documenting procedures so that staff or volunteers can continue activities
- b. Creating products (e.g., websites, templates, communications) that will continue to be used after VISTA member has left
- c. Fundraising/mobilizing resources

- d. Creating a framework for volunteer management and retention
- e. Establishing or amplifying mechanism(s) for the community/beneficiaries to have a voice (e.g. advisory councils)
- f. Building or strengthening partnerships with community organizations
- g. Training staff or community volunteers to use tools and systems developed through the VISTA project
- h. Other (please specify): _____
- i. Choose not to answer

25. What are your top three challenges to sustainability?

- a. VISTA member turnover/early termination
- b. Staff turnover
- c. Lack of advance planning
- d. VISTA performance issues
- e. Lack of information/support/technical assistance from state/regional office or VISTA HQ
- f. Lack of community support for project
- g. Lack of cash or in-kind resources for project
- h. Lack of volunteers for project
- i. Lack of documentation/difficulty in project handover
- j. Lack of funding for full-time staff to take over these responsibilities
- k. No challenges
- l. Other (please specify—if any challenges are related to Covid-19, please explain here):

- m. Choose not to answer

Section VI: VISTA and non-VISTA Resources

This section asks about resources you may have used or would like to use for developing and managing your VISTA project.

26. Which type of learning do you prefer?

- a. Self-directed learning
- b. Person-led learning
- c. Either type of learning
- d. Other (Please specify): _____

27. Which formats do you prefer for self-directed learning? [Select all that apply]

- a. Instructional videos
- b. Blog posts
- c. Training manuals
- d. Recorded webinars
- e. Podcasts
- f. Other (Please specify): _____

28. How useful do you find the following resources? If you do not use these resources, you might choose “not applicable.” [Response options: Not at all, slightly, moderately, considerably, a great deal, not applicable, choose not to respond] Please also indicate for what aspect of the VISTA you find them helpful: project development, project management, project sustainability, member recruitment or retention?

- a. VISTA Campus resources
- b. VISTA Sponsor Handbook
- c. VISTA State or Regional Office
- d. Sponsor Convening/Sponsor Orientation events
- e. Knowledge Network
- f. Resources on the CNCS website nationalservice.gov
- g. In-service training (IST) or webinars
- h. VISTA sponsor webinars
- i. VAD
- j. Manual/member handbook
- k. Example documents and worksheets
- l. Resources created by my organization specifically for VISTA
- m. Resources or guidance from other VISTA project directors or site supervisors (outside my organization)

n. Choose not to respond

o. Other (please specify, (you may add any resources that you use to meet the goals of your VISTA project)):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Section VII: Project and Participant Characteristics

As we near the end of the survey, this section includes questions about your VISTA project and your role with the project.

29. Which of the following best describes your VISTA project?

- a. Developing a new program or service
- b. Expanding an existing program or service
- c. Improving the quality of an existing program or service
- d. Other (please describe): _____
- e. Choose not to answer

30. How many years have you been working with your organization's VISTA project?

- a. Less than 1 year
- b. 1 to 2 years
- c. 3 to 5 years
- d. More than 5 years
- e. Choose not to answer

31. How would you describe your role?

- a. Overseeing the VISTA project is my full-time job
- b. Overseeing the VISTA project is part of my job
- c. I have another full-time job and do only "assigned duties" on the VISTA project
- d. Other (please specify): _____
- e. Choose not to answer

32. Are you the Project Director or Project Manager for a Multi-site project?

- a. Yes [GO TO QUESTION 33]
- b. No [GO TO QUESTION 34]

Section VIIb: Multi-Site Project Directors

33. What do you believe is most important for successfully on-boarding new VISTA site supervisors?

- a. Explaining the mission and purpose of VISTA
- b. Training sites in VISTA protocols, procedures, and reporting methods
- c. Sharing VISTA resources (e.g., training manual, online resources)
- d. Enabling new VISTA sites and supervisors to connect with existing VISTA sites and supervisors
- e. Mentoring sites in effective supervision of VISTA members
- f. Other (please specify) _____

Section VIII: Additional Comments and Recommended Resources

34. Do you have any additional comments that you would like to share about VISTA project development, management, or sustainability? This can include challenges, areas for improvement, recommended best practices, or ways that VISTA can support these activities. (Please include any additional comments about your project's adaptation to Covid-19.)

35. If you would recommend non-VISTA external resources, such as websites or books, or are willing to share resources created by your organization specifically for VISTA, please enter your email address here: _____