Support Grant Budget Guidance and Instructions

AmeriCorps VISTA
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SUPPORT GRANT OVERVIEW

WHAT IS A SUPPORT GRANT?

AmeriCorps VISTA provides limited resources in the form of grant funds to qualifying organizations, these grants are called support grants. Support grants provide financial resources to help our partners effectively manage their VISTA project and are primarily used to support supervision, training, and transportation costs associated with project oversight and activities. Support grants have a very limited scope of use, and these instructions provide information regarding allowable and unallowable expenses.

WHAT ARE THE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS?

To receive any VISTA resources, including a support grant, your organization must meet the requirements outlined in the Project Application Instructions found on our website under 'Guidance and Instructions.'

To be eligible to receive a support grant, your project application and budget must show:

- The expenditure is necessary and appropriate to ensure that a VISTA Volunteer, Leader, or Summer Associate has available support to carry out the purpose of the VISTA program and to effectively perform the service to which VISTA Volunteer, Leader, or Summer Associate is assigned.
- The need for support cannot be met within your organization's own structure and resources.

ALLOWABLE EXPENSES

Support grants have a very limited scope of use. Additionally, some line items may only be funded in the second year of the project and beyond. Support grants can be used to assist your organization with funding one or more of the following items in your VISTA project:

- Full or partial salary and fringe benefit costs of staff who directly supervise VISTA Volunteers, Leaders, and if applicable, Summer Associates
- Costs related to criminal history checks for staff paid from the support grant funds
- Monitoring-related transportation or travel expenses for supervisors as well as travel costs for supervisors to attend AmeriCorps sponsored or sanctioned events
- Audit-related costs (if partner meets eligibility criteria)
- Service-related transportation expenses of VISTA Volunteers, Leaders, and Summer Associates for **projects in their second year and beyond**

- In rare instance and with additional approval, costs for implementing training events for VISTA Volunteers, Leader, and/or Summer Associates for **projects in their second year and beyond**

Support grant projects are responsible for local operating and logistical costs that may go beyond the scope of allowable expenses for support grant funds. Recipients of support grants design, operate, and direct the project and are also awarded a certain number of VISTA Volunteer positions.

First year projects may receive support grants for costs associated with supervision, benefits, Criminal History Check expenses, and supervisor travel for site visits. No funds may be used in the first year to make payments or reimbursements to VISTA Volunteers.

UNALLOWABLE EXPENSES

Expenses that are **not** allowable costs for VISTA support grants include:

- Equipment or supplies, including computers, software, or office supplies
- Contractual services, unless used specifically for background checks
- Communication expenses, printing and logistics, including advertising cost associated with recruitment or project promotion
- Funding for indirect costs
- Daily Commuting Expenses
- Housing or Meal Plans
- Office space or related costs

MATCH REQUIREMENT

AmeriCorps VISTA support grants do not have a minimum match requirement.

Support grant projects are still responsible for local operating and logistical costs that may go beyond the scope of allowable expenses for support grants funds. This support should be reflected in your project application under the Budget/Cost Effectiveness narrative and should not be described in the Budget section itself.

FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS

You should refer to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (2 CFR §200) as guiding regulations.

As a partner, your organization must comply with all applicable federal laws, regulations, and OMB requirements for grant management, allowable costs, and audits, including providing audits to the Federal Audit Clearinghouse if they expend over $1,000,000 in federal funds, as required in OMB's Uniform Guidance.

Resources you will need to effectively manage your grant are found on the AmeriCorps Mange Your Grant webpage.

AmeriCorps uses the Health and Human Services (HHS) "Payment Management System (PMS)" for the disbursement of awarded grant funds. HHS requires that all grantees and potential grantees complete account set-up forms to be ready for entry in the "Payment Management System." You are encouraged to prepare and submit the forms listed below in conjunction with your application. However, submission of these forms does not guarantee that your application will be approved for funding, nor do they impact the review of your application.

Current partners already using the PMS system do not need to re-submit the HHS/PMS forms.

- HHS/PMS Access Form
- Direct Deposit Sign-Up Form (SF-1199A)
    - Copies of the SF-1199A form and instructions for completing this form can be obtained by visiting: "Add/Update Banking Information"
- Recipient Contact Form can be obtained by visiting Manage Your Grant webpage under "Pre-Award Resources".

Upon award, support grants will be required to take the following on demand trainings provide via the agency's training platform Litmos. The trainings can be viewed by visiting Manage Your Grant webpage under "Pre-Award Resources":

- Key Concepts of Financial Grants Management eCourse
- Funds Management Training for AmeriCorps Grantees
- National Service Criminal History Check eCourse

Applicant Operational and Financial Management Survey (OFMS)

All new support grant partners must complete an Applicant Operational and Financial Management Survey (OFMS) with the submission of your application.

The OFMS form can be found on the Manage Your Grant webpage under "Pre-Award Resources."

SAM.Gov Registration

All resources recipients must register for Unique Entity ID (UEI) from the federal System for Award Management (SAM.gov).and be registered at SAM.gov. This registration is free. If your organization already has a UEI, use this information for your SAM.gov registration.

Confirm the information you entered in SAM.gov exactly matches the information you input into eGrants.

SUPPORT GRANT BUDGET INSTRUCTIONS IN EGRANTS

To apply for support grant resources, you must designate your application as a "support grant" in eGrants. In the "Application Information Section" of your application in eGrants, select the "Support Grant" program type. This must be selected for the system to populate the budget components of the application.

All budget periods are to be proposed for a 12-months.

In eGrants, the "Budget / Budget Narrative" has one section you are required to complete. The line items you enter are based on whether you are a new or continuing project receiving a support grant:

- Budget Section 1. Program Operating Costs
    - Includes costs associated with VISTA Volunteer support expenses incurred by the project, such as project personnel, fringe benefits, staff travel, and other VISTA Volunteer support costs.

TIPS FOR COMPLETING THE BUDGET

- Your project application narratives must provide supporting explanation of the proposed costs.
- You must include the requested purpose and the basis of your calculation in the Budget Narrative. (e.g. Salary for Program Coordinator: $45,000 at 30% time for VISTA Project Director Role = $13,500.)
- Use only whole dollars, rounding up to the nearest dollar if necessary.
- Your budget entries should reflect a twelve-month project period.
- All grantee requested expenses to be paid with support grant funds are to be entered under the "CNCS Share".
- Once you have entered your budget information in eGrants, you will be asked to validate your budget, and eGrants will check your submission for errors that must be fixed prior to submission.

BUDGET SECTION 1. PROGRAM OPERATING COSTS

PROJECT PERSONNEL EXPENSES

- Complete this line item to apply for grant funds for the salary costs of supervising VISTA Volunteers, Leaders and if applicable, Summer Associates assigned to your project.
- Funds to support supervision can be directed to more than one staff member of your organization or its service locations, but all listed personnel **must** directly supervise VISTA Volunteers, Leader, and/or Summer Associates. Costs to cover the supervision of the VISTA project supervisor are not allowable.
    - Direct supervision includes but not limited to:
        - recruitment and selection of VISTA Volunteers, preparation of individual VISTA assignment descriptions,
        - orientation to the project,
        - day-to-day oversight,
        - preparation of service verification documents, and/or
        - preparation of project progress reports.
    - Funds may **not** be used to pay staff salaries to prepare the concept paper, project application, or continuation applications.
    - Staff other than the project supervisor(s) may not be reimbursed with VISTA grant dollars.
    - All staff listed in the budget must adhere to AmeriCorps' National Service Criminal History Check requirements.
    - Information about each supervisor should be listed along with a position title, salary amount, and the percentage of time devoted to VISTA Volunteer supervision.
    - Organizations with multiple supervisors with different salaries, titles or other differing characteristics should create separate line items for each position.

ACTION STEP: Click "add a new budget item" and complete the requested information to apply for funds to support supervision:

- For "Position/Title" enter the current or intended title of the individual(s) devoted to supervision.
- For "Qty" enter the number of individuals who match this exact title, salary and who will spend the same percentage of time devoted to supervision. You should complete new line items for each individual's position.
- For "Annual Salary" enter the annual salary for one individual.

- For "% Time" enter the percentage of time that each person listed above will spend on supervision. The percentage listed should not exceed the percentage of actual time devoted to supervision by each individual.
- Click into the box called "CNCS Share." Refer to the "Total Amount" calculated by eGrants and enter the portion of the amount that you are requesting from AmeriCorps.

PERSONNEL FRINGE BENEFITS:

- Complete this line to apply for grant funds for the costs of personnel fringe benefits for the individuals who will be supervising VISTA Volunteers, Leaders and/or Summer Associates.
- Fringe benefits are allowable support grant line items only for individuals listed above in "Project Personnel Expenses" and who are receiving salary support from AmeriCorps.
- Allowable fringe benefits include FICA, Health Insurance, Retirement, and Life Insurance.
- The percentage of fringe benefits paid must be less than or equal to the percentage of salary support being requested. See the ACTION STEP example below for an illustration of this requirement.
- Information about each fringe benefit request should be listed along with a description; total fringe benefit annual amount; the percentage of time devoted to VISTA supervision; and the percentage of the overall fringe benefit costs being requested from AmeriCorps.

ACTION STEP: Click "add a new budget item" and complete the requested information to apply for fringe benefit support funds.

- Example: An individual will spend 20% of their time devoted to VISTA supervision and the applicant organization is requesting grant funds from AmeriCorps for 50% of the costs of salary support for that time. In total, this applicant is requesting VISTA support grant funds to pay 10% (0.20 * 0.50 = 0.10) of the supervisor's annual salary. Thus, they may only request "CNCS Share" to cover up to 10% of total annual fringe benefits.

LOCAL TRAVEL

- Complete this line item to apply for grant funds for the costs of travel incurred for local service location monitoring by the individuals who will be supervising VISTA Volunteers, Leader and/or Summer Associates.
- Local travel support funds may be requested by your organization for full or partial funding to cover travel expenses incurred for local service location monitoring, but only in those cases where such support is necessary for compliance and for the effective functioning of the VISTA Volunteers, Leaders, or Summer Associates on the project and

where such support for project staff travel cannot be met within the your organization's own structure and resources.

- Funds to support project staff travel are in the amount of the costs of public transportation or, where public transportation is not adequate, in the amount of the Privately Owned Vehicle (POV) Mileage Reimbursement Rate. The POV mileage reimbursement rate should be at least the rate applied to all travel within your organization and no greater than the federal mileage rate. If there is no standard rate within your organization, then the federal mileage rate should be applied. (Current federal mileage rates can be found at: www.gsa.gov/mileage)
- Your organization will be responsible for any expenses incurred for such travel over the agreed amount.

ACTION STEP: Click "add a new budget item" and complete the requested information to apply for local travel support funds for project staff:

- For "Purpose" enter information about the purpose of local travel, including position title of project staff. (e.g. Project Supervisor travel to monitor local sites A, B and C.)
- For "Calculation" enter a description in the form of an equation. (e.g., 1 Supervisor traveling @ $25/trip for 2 trips = $50. Include costs for transportation and/or other related expenses, such as bus passes to local sites, mileage rates, etc.)
- Enter information into the "CNCS Share" box for resources you are requesting from CNCS.

LONG DISTANCE TRAVEL

- Complete this line item to apply for grant funds for the costs of travel incurred for long distance service location monitoring by the individuals who will be supervising VISTA Volunteers, Leaders and if applicable, or Summer Associates.
- Long distance travel support funds may be requested by your organization for full or partial funding to cover travel expenses incurred for subrecipient monitoring, but only in those cases where such support is necessary for compliance and for the effective functioning of the VISTA Volunteers, Leader, or Summer Associates on the project and where such support for project staff travel cannot be met within your organization's own structure and resources.
- Funds to support project staff travel are in the amount of the costs of public transportation or, where public transportation is not adequate, in the amount of the Privately Owned Vehicle (POV) Mileage Reimbursement Rates. The POV mileage reimbursement rate should be at least the rate applied to all travel within your organization and no greater than the federal mileage rate. If there is no standard rate within your organization, then the federal mileage rate should be applied.
- Your organization will be responsible for any expenses incurred for such travel over the agreed amount.

ACTION STEP: Click "add a new budget item" and complete the requested information to apply for project staff travel support funds:

- For "Purpose" enter information about the purpose of project staff travel, including position title. (e.g. Project Supervisor travel to monitor sites A and B)
- For "Calculation" enter a description in the form of an equation. (e.g., 1 Supervisor traveling at $250/trip for 2 trips = $500. Include costs for transportation and other related expenses, such as bus passes, mileage rates, hotel expenses, etc.)
- Enter information into the "CNCS Share" box for resources you are requesting from CNCS.

AUDITS

- Complete this line item to request grant funds for the costs of required audits.
- Audits are allowable costs if your organization meets OMB threshold requirements. The current requirement sets forth that a single or program-specific audit is required if a non-federal entity expends $1,000,000 or more in federal awards during the non-federal entity's fiscal year.
- If an audit is required because your organization meets the threshold, VISTA grant funds may be utilized on a pro-rated charge that is determined among the federal programs involved. You may forecast the amount of audit costs based on your funding history.

ACTION STEP: Click "Add a New Budget item" to enter audit information.

- For "Item" enter information about the audit, including the total amount and the portions of funding that your organization receives from various federal agencies.
- Example: If an organization received 50% of their federal funding from Health and Human Services, 40% of federal funding from the Department of Education, and 10% of federal funding from AmeriCorps, then a reasonable allocation of costs might be to charge the audit according to the percentage of federal funds received (10% for AmeriCorps in this example). This applicant might request AmeriCorps to cover up to 10% of total annual audit amount.

OTHER PROGRAM OPERATING COSTS

- Complete this section to request grant funds for expenses related to:
    - Service-related transportation expenses of VISTA Volunteers, Leaders, and Summer Associates and/or
    - In limited instances and with additional approval, costs for implementing training events for VISTA Volunteers, Leader, and/or Summer Associates.
- Individual line items will need to be created for noted expenses.

Travel

- Complete this line item to request grant funds for service-related transportation for VISTA Volunteers, Leader, and Summer Associates serving on the project. Service-related transportation is transportation related to fulfilling the VISTA Volunteer's day-to-day service duties at the project site.
- Do not list daily commute, AmeriCorps invitational training travel, or relocation travel costs in this section.
- Your organization is responsible for the costs of service-related transportation for VISTA Volunteers, Leader, and/or Summer Associates.
- Support grant funds may be requested by your organization for full or partial funding for service-related transportation of VISTA Volunteers, Leader, and/or Summer Associates.
  - To receive funding, service-related transportation must be necessary and appropriate. Your application must show that service-related transportation is necessary for VISTA Volunteers to effectively perform their work and carry out the purpose of the VISTA program. You must also explain why your organization cannot provide service-related transportation with existing resources.
- Grants for service-related transportation are in the amount of the costs of public transportation or, where public transportation is not adequate, in the amount of Privately Owned Vehicle (POV) Mileage Reimbursement Rates. The POV mileage reimbursement rate should be at least the rate applied to all travel within your organization, up to the federal mileage rate. If there is no standard rate within your organization, then use the federal mileage rate.
- You will be responsible for any expenses incurred for service-related transportation over the agreed amount.
- Support grant funds for service-related transportation may not be used to:
  - Cover relocation costs of a VISTA Volunteer, Leader or Summer Associate, since those costs are provided directly by AmeriCorps
  - Cover the costs of VISTA Volunteers, Leaders, or Summer Associates traveling from their residence to and from their service site (i.e., daily commuting costs)
  - Cover costs of providing direct services to the beneficiaries of the VISTA project (e.g., delivering meals)
  - Cover travel costs for training

ACTION STEP: Click "add a new budget item" and complete the requested information to apply for service-related transportation support grant funds.

- For "Item/Description" enter a description of the purpose of the service-related transportation.
- For "Calculation" provide a description in the form of an equation that includes costs for transportation and other related expenses for VISTA Volunteers to travel outside their service location or between sites, such as bus passes to local sites, mileage

reimbursement for use of car, etc. For example: 3 VISTAs traveling at $2.50/bus trip for 10 trips = $75.

- For "Total Amount" enter the total cost for service-related transportation for the VISTA project. For "CNCS Share" enter the portion of the "Total Amount" that you are requesting from CNCS.

Training

- Complete this line item to request grant funds to be used for pre-approved costs for implementing training events for VISTA Volunteers, Leader, and/or Summer Associates. Please read through the rest of the instructions before completing this section in eGrants.
- In rare instances, AmeriCorps may determine that a partner may be eligible to receive grant funds to offset costs associated with providing additional professional development and ongoing training and support.
- Resources cannot be provided for required Volunteer trainings. Funds may not be requested for the trainings AmeriCorps VISTA provides (such as VISTA Service Orientation (VSO), etc.) or your On-Site Orientation and Training (OSOT).
- To be eligible to receive grant funds to implement VISTA Volunteer training, AmeriCorps must decide that:
  - Your organization is in good standing with the agency
  - It is in the interests of the VISTA program.
  - The training is applicable and necessary.
    - Your organization can develop a curriculum and manage logistics that aligns with the project.
    - The training is necessary for the VISTA Volunteers to effectively perform their duties and carry out the purpose of the VISTA program.
- If you are interested in holding additional training than what is provided by AmeriCorps VISTA, please contact your AmeriCorps regional office BEFORE submitting your budget request.
- If the VISTA program determines that your application for grant funds for VISTA Volunteer training is warranted, you can request funds by clicking "add a new budget item" and completing the requested information. You should:
  - Describe the purpose of the training
  - Identify the number of individuals that will be trained, along with an estimated cost per individual
  - Describe any training-related travel needs, such as costs for transportation, lodging, per diem, and other travel related expenses multiplied by the number of trips/participants
  - AmeriCorps determines the amount of the grant for VISTA Volunteer training based on the actual costs of the training and available funds.