



Vermont Climate Corps VISTA Disaster Cadre Request for Proposals

Service Year: March 2025 – March 2026

Letter of Intent Requested By:
November 21, 2024, 12:00 PM

Accepting Applications on an Ongoing
Basis Through January 10, 2025

Note: The priority is to place members in high
quality positions. Flexibility will be provided to
timelines as necessary.

SerVermont

Agency of Human Services

208 State Drive

Waterbury, VT 05671-1000

<http://servermont.vermont.gov/>

ABOUT SERVERMONT

SerVermont's mission is to promote, support, and recognize volunteerism and community service throughout Vermont. SerVermont administers the federally funded AmeriCorps State program, sponsors and manages an AmeriCorps VISTA program, manages volunteers in disasters, and works with other national service and local partners to address pressing challenges in Vermont through service. SerVermont was established by Executive Order 05-98 on November 30, 1993, by Governor Howard Dean. The Governor appoints up to 25 individuals to serve three-year terms as members of the SerVermont Commission. Through all streams of service (AmeriCorps State, National, VISTA, and NCCC, as well as Senior Corps) AmeriCorps supports approximately 2,900 people of all ages and backgrounds serving in Vermont at over 500 locations.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS - DISASTER SERVICES PRIORITY AREA

This Request for Proposals is a **new** opportunity made possible by the Federal AmeriCorps Agency and SerVermont. SerVermont is seeking to fill **six (6)** Disaster Services VISTA Positions with a specific focus on Flood Recovery. Members may engage in Disaster Preparation, Response, Recovery, and/or Mitigation in response to the recent Climate Disasters in Vermont.

SerVermont is especially interested in partnering with organizations that are focused on flood remediation and long-term recovery following the 2023 and 2024 flooding that occurred throughout the State, in addition to climate resiliency and combatting climate change.

This initiative will serve in collaboration with SerVermont's emerging Vermont Climate Corps Network, which is affiliated with the American Climate Corps.

Selected Host Sites must be prepared to host a VISTA member beginning service no later than **March 2025**. While there is a Cost Share associated with these positions (see page 5, part a.), SerVermont is actively working to identify scholarship opportunities to reduce barriers to participation. Additionally, SerVermont has obtained Housing opportunities for VISTAs in Central Vermont.

Please see Page 9 for Letter of Intent and Application instructions. Any eligible applicants seeking to apply for an AmeriCorps VISTA member(s) through the Vermont Climate Corps VISTA Disaster Cadre must work with SerVermont to do so.

VISTA UMBRELLA PROJECT

AmeriCorps VISTA members are made available through SerVermont by a VISTA Supervision Grant from the AmeriCorps Agency, formerly the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), the federal agency that oversees National Service.

SerVermont administers the VISTA Umbrella Project on behalf of AmeriCorps VISTA. The statewide SerVermont VISTA project seeks to end poverty in Vermont by building capacity in organizations that address homelessness, provide job training, fight hunger, provide nutrition education, and address the opioid epidemic. **This cohort will address flood recovery, and will join our umbrella cohort already serving throughout the State.**

Every VISTA Project Host Site must fall within the **VISTA Programming Framework**:

- **Anti-Poverty Focus** - As previously noted, by law, the purpose of VISTA is to support efforts to fight poverty. The goal of every project must be to help individuals and communities move out of poverty, not simply make poverty more tolerable. The project should focus on long-term solutions rather than short-term services.
- **Community Empowerment** - Potential and current VISTA project sponsors must ensure that their project engages residents of the low-income community in planning, developing, implementing, and evaluating the project. The project must be responsive and relevant to the lives of the community residents, and should tap into inherent community assets, strengths, and resources.
- **Sustainable Solutions** - As originally designated in the Domestic Volunteer Service Act and reinforced in the Serve America Act, VISTA members are a short-term resource who serve to build the long-term sustainability of anti-poverty programs. All VISTA projects should be developed with a goal to phase-out the need for VISTA members and strengthen the ability of the project to continue without them. VISTA projects typically last three years, occasionally longer. From the beginning of the project planning process, the sponsor and community must think about how to use the VISTA project to phase in other resources and systems to replace the VISTA resource.
- **Capacity Building** - Through activities such as fundraising, establishment of volunteer recruitment and management systems, community outreach, and partnership development, VISTAs help sponsors achieve lasting solutions to poverty. In order to build capacity, **VISTAs do not perform direct service**. Direct

service is defined as activities that immediately address individual clients' needs and these activities are usually focused on short term goals. Ideally, VISTAs work themselves out of a job and create systems that remain long after their service ends.

- **Flood Recovery** – This batch of positions is specific to flood recovery.

Furthermore, VISTAs are prohibited from engaging in activities that would supplant the tasks of or displace paid staff, contractors, or existing volunteers. This includes activities related to the development and management of other AmeriCorps grants and programs.

Every **VISTA Assignment Description** must be guided by one or more of the following objectives:

1. To expand the capacity of communities to develop and sustain effective programs that address various issues related to poverty
2. To strengthen the operating systems of programs that support individuals and families facing poverty-related obstacles in their lives (e.g., build volunteer systems, design data systems, institute program documentation procedures, refine program operating systems, improve the quality of services, etc.)
3. To increase financial and in-kind resources available to programs that support individuals and families facing poverty-related obstacles in their lives.
4. To increase community participation in programs with a special focus on meeting the needs of individuals and families facing poverty related obstacles in their lives.
5. To increase the coordination between poverty-focused programs and other appropriate community services.
6. To increase community commitment to and involvement in programs that support individuals and families facing poverty related obstacles in their lives.

SINGLE POINT OF CONTACT

SerVermont's single point of contact for this competition is Caitlin Perrier, VISTA Program Manager. Caitlin can be reached at (802) 585-6835 and/or Caitlin.perrier@vermont.gov

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Public or private nonprofit organizations, including faith-based and other community organizations; institutions of higher education; government entities within Vermont (e.g., cities, counties); labor organizations; partnerships and consortia; and Tribes.

Organizations that have been convicted of a Federal crime are disqualified from receiving the assistance described in this RFP, and related AmeriCorps documents. Organizations described in section 501 (c)(4) of the Internal Revenue code of 1986, that engage in lobbying activities are not eligible to apply.

SCOPE OF SERVICES

Successful applicants will be expected to host an AmeriCorps as proposed in compliance with all applicable rules and regulations at both the federal and state level.

SerVermont AmeriCorps VISTA Host Sites must:

- a) Pay a cost-share and training and technical assistance fee to SerVermont. First year sites pay \$6,000 and the amount increases by \$1,000 each year not to exceed \$8,000. **Please note**, scholarships may be offered on a case-by-case basis.
- b) Read, maintain copies of, and follow the law, regulations, and policies governing the AmeriCorps VISTA program of the AmeriCorps Agency as stated in the VISTA Supervisor's Manual (provided by VISTA HQ at <http://vistacampus.org/>, or by the State upon request) and follow all policies instituted by the State.
- c) Develop an acceptable VISTA Assignment Description (VAD) for the AmeriCorps VISTA member on the form provided by the State for approval prior to assignment of a VISTA member. The VAD will set forth the activities and tasks that the member will focus on during service. To add tasks or alter the VAD, the Host Site will need to get written permission from the State. (See also 2.v.). SerVermont staff will be available to assist in the creation of VADs.
- d) Facilitate AmeriCorps VISTA member selection by disseminating advertisements, interviewing prospective applicants, contacting applicant references, selecting an appropriate applicant, and ensuring that a complete VISTA application is received by the State by the required date.

- e) Select a Site Supervisor for approval by the State; ensure that the Site Supervisor, prior to assuming supervisory duties, attends an orientation facilitated by the State; ensure that the Site Supervisor selects an appropriate designee to perform required duties if the Site Supervisor is not available; and inform the State immediately if the Site Supervisor changes and make sure that the new Site Supervisor attends the required supervisor orientation. The Site Supervisor **MUST** be a paid staff member and the person who directly supervises the VISTA.
- f) Make every reasonable effort to ensure that the health and safety of the AmeriCorps VISTA member is protected during the performance of the VISTA member's assigned duties. Project Site shall not assign or require the VISTA member to perform duties which would jeopardize the VISTA member's safety or cause the VISTA member to sustain injuries.
- g) Provide day-to-day supervision of the activities of the VISTA member.
- h) Ensure that the Site Supervisor meets with the VISTA member for a one-hour supervision meeting at least weekly, to give direction and support, solicit input, and inquire about the general well-being of the VISTA.
- i) Ensure that VISTA members completely fill out required weekly reports (timesheets) and monthly data reports and ensure that they are submitted and approved on time. Site Supervisor shall track member use of personal leave [ten (10) days annually] and medical leave [ten (10) days annually].
- j) **Provide mileage reimbursement and/or public transportation costs to the VISTA member for service-related activities** (e.g., off-site travel to service-related meetings events, as well as training sessions, meetings, events, etc. sponsored by the Corporation, or the State) as well as cover approved travel-related expenses.
- k) Ensure that the VISTA member participates in all training sessions required by the State, AmeriCorps, and SerVermont. This includes allowing the VISTA member time off from the Project Site and ensuring that the VISTA member has transportation to and from the training. If a VISTA misses a required training, meeting, or event, the Host Site may be responsible for reimbursing the State or AmeriCorps.

- l) Ensure the successful retention of the VISTA throughout the program year by communicating timely notifications to SerVermont in the event of any grievances or challenges faced at the Host Site. Additionally, the Host Site will not make any job offer or encourage partner agencies to make any job offer to a current VISTA that would interfere with successful completion of their service term.
- m) Provide materials, office supplies and equipment related to the performance of the member's assignment and provide adequate working space to permit the VISTA member to perform his/her assigned duties outlined in the Site's most current VAD approved by the State and AmeriCorps.
- n) Keep at least five hundred dollars (\$500) per member emergency fund for situations such as travel funds for emergency leave and living allowance advancement if VISTA member's check is delayed.
- o) Notify the State immediately regarding unscheduled departure of the VISTA member from the Host Site and unscheduled changes of status and condition of the VISTA member, such as arrest, hospitalization, and absence without leave. Notify the State if the member will be away from the site for more than five consecutive business days for any reason, including attending conferences or using personal leave.
- p) Allow the VISTA member to participate in local emergency disaster relief efforts if needed. The Host Site will need to release the member from service at the site if the member's assistance in an emergency disaster relief effort is requested by SerVermont or AmeriCorps. If none of those entities has requested member participation, then the Host Site will need to get permission from the State before allowing a member to participate in disaster relief.
- q) Allow and encourage the VISTA member to participate in Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service activities; and encourage members to participate in other Days of Service (e.g., Green Up Day, National Volunteer Week, and Make A Difference Day) should activities be organized in the communities where the VISTA member is in service.
- r) Assist in reviewing performance of the VISTA member when requested by the State and/or AmeriCorps.

- s) Maintain such records and accounts and make such reports and investigations concerning matters involving the VISTA member and the project as AmeriCorps or State may require. The Host Site agrees to retain such records as AmeriCorps or State may require for a period of **three (3) years** after completion or termination of the project, or longer if required for administrative proceedings and/or litigation purposes, and to provide access to such records to AmeriCorps and/or State for the purposes of litigation, audit, or examination. Records should include timesheets; mileage reimbursement; number of volunteers recruited and number of hours served; names of donors, items donated, value; names of grantors, amounts of grants; and other relevant documents related to VISTA member service.
- t) Ensure that the Site Supervisor prepares, with input from the VISTA member, all **required** reports and submits complete reports, including all required documentation, to State on time.
- u) A sponsor may, at its discretion, provide support for housing for AmeriCorps members serving in the VISTA program. While there is no maximum threshold set for the amount of assistance, it should be based on the actual costs members paid for housing (reimbursable costs) and should be consistent with the member's commitment to live among and at the economic level of the people served. Moreover, a sponsor's support for housing must be offered equally to all AmeriCorps members at the site who are serving in the VISTA program. Support for housing can be provided in the form of a one-time security deposit and/or as housing reimbursement support. All housing support must be provided as a reimbursable expense directly to a member or paid directly to the landlord or leasing agent. Inform the member that the subsidy might increase the amount of reportable income for tax purposes; and ensure that the site follows all laws, regulations, and policies of the U.S. Internal Revenue Service and the State of Vermont.
- v) If providing a child care subsidy on behalf of the member, inform the State of the amount, frequency of payment, and to whom the payment is made; ensure that the payment is NOT made to the member, but directly to the child care provider; inform the member that the subsidy might increase the amount of reportable income for tax purposes; and ensure that the site follows all laws, regulations, and policies of the U.S. Internal Revenue Service and the State of Vermont.
- w) Ensure that the service of the member does not deviate from the most current,

approved VISTA Assignment Description (VAD). If changes to the VAD are needed, contact the State who will review proposed changes and make a determination if those changes fit within rules and regulations of VISTA and the objectives and regulations of the State. (See also 2.b.)

- x) Ensure that the Site Supervisor conducts an orientation for the VISTA member, pursuant to the written On-Site Orientation plan, and pertaining to the current VAD during the first weeks of service.
- y) Ensure that the member does not receive any cash benefit from the site. Members receive a living allowance, based on the poverty level, from AmeriCorps.
- z) Inform the State if member enrolls or plans to enroll in any class and ensure that the member understands that obligations to service supersede class requirements. VISTA Members who wish to take classes must receive approval from AmeriCorps and State prior to doing so.
- aa) All notices and communications required to be given to the State by the Host Site, except as otherwise specifically provided, shall be directed to SerVermont VISTA Program, c/o SerVermont, 280 State Drive Waterbury, VT 05671.
- bb) Notify the State at least sixty (60) days prior to completion of service if the Host Site and Member intend to extend the term of the VISTA member's service beyond twelve (12) full months.

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

Meet the scope of services for performance as a VISTA Host Site and meet the objectives and goals as outlined in the host site application and VISTA Assignment Description.

METHOD OF AWARD AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

The process for selecting sites is as non-competitive and collaborative as possible, while also ensuring that our member slots are filled, and members are recruited in a timely manner. SerVermont **must** place 6 VISTA members on this project, therefore may have to make decisions based on the information we have at the time of VISTA recruitment deadlines.

SerVermont's goal is to place VISTAs where they are most needed while considering:

1. **Capacity:** placing members at sites that have the capacity to recruit, train, and supervise members with a high level of effectiveness.
2. **Impact:** placing members at sites where the efforts of their service will make a positive impact in the community by alleviating poverty.
3. **Geographic Distribution:** placing members throughout the state in concentrations that mirror population and poverty-based need concentrations.
4. **Performance Measurement:** Sites are REQUIRED to measure the impact of their VISTA member in accordance with AmeriCorps policies. Sites which do not have the capacity to measure their member's progress will not be granted a VISTA member. All sites will be accountable for meeting their measures, and documenting progress in the manner which VISTA requires for that measure. **This will require additional time to administer.**

INTENT TO APPLY

It is requested that interested organizations submit Letters of Intent to SerVermont VISTA Program Manager Caitlin Perrier at Caitlin.perrier@vermont.gov by Thursday, November 21, 2024 at 12:00 PM.

Letters of Intent should include the following:

1. Name of Organization
2. Contact Person
3. Contact information including: address, phone, and email.
4. The geographic region that will be served by the VISTA
5. A brief (2-3 paragraphs) summary of your proposed VISTA project, addressing the following:
 - a. Describe how the VISTA position will be related to flood recovery
 - b. Describe the anti-poverty element of the project
 - c. Describe the Capacity Building activities that the VISTA member will engage in

APPLICATION

As this is a new, one-time RFP, Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis, in collaboration with SerVermont's VISTA Program Manager, Caitlin Perrier; and Executive

Director, Phil Kolling. Additional information about your proposed position will be collected after receipt of your LOI.

Attachments to Include with New Applications

- Job Description of Site Supervisor
- Resume or C.V. of Site Supervisor
- Letter of Support from Board or Advisory Committee. Must support placing a member at the site and paying the cost share. This letter should be current and signed by an authorized representative.
- List of Board of Directors. Must be current, dated, and contain board member’s affiliation.

INFORMATIONAL SESSIONS

SerVermont will host two Informational Sessions in November to explain this unique opportunity and process further. Organizations interested in being Host Sites are required to attend one session – or request an alternative, individual session.

1. Tuesday, November 12, 10:00 – 11:00 AM
2. Wednesday, November 20, 2:00 – 3:00 PM

MINIMUM INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS

All applicants must meet the minimum insurance requirements required by the state, as outlined in state Attachment C: Standard State Provisions for Contracts and Grants. A link to Attachment C can be found here: <https://bgs.vermont.gov/purchasing-contracting/forms>.

APPLICATION AND RECRUITMENT TIMELINE

Request for Proposals Released	Thursday, October 31, 2024
Informational Meeting 1	Tuesday, November 12 at 10:00 AM
Informational Meeting 2	Wednesday, November 20, 2:00 – 3:00 PM
Letter of Intent Requested By	Thursday, November 21 at 12:00 PM
VISTA Member Recruitment	Ongoing
VISTA Members Begin Service	March 10, 2025