



**INITIATIVE FOUNDATION
AMERICORPS*VISTA PROGRAM
2008-2009 SERVICE YEAR**



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

The Initiative Foundation, in partnership with the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), is requesting proposals from organizations interested in having an AmeriCorps*VISTA member for the 2008-2009 service year. The Initiative Foundation AmeriCorps*VISTA Program will provide placements and support to up to 20 members across the Initiative Foundation 14-county service area.

Project inquiries can be obtained at our website and must be submitted by February 8, 2008 to:
Chris Fastner, Initiative Foundation, 405 First St. SE, Little Falls MN, 56345
cfastner@ifound.org

Eligibility Requirements:

Eligible agencies include public, private, or faith-based nonprofit organizations and local, state and federal agencies.

Project Site Selection Process:

- 1) **February 8, 2007** - Project inquiry forms due in Initiative Foundation office. (Must be typed. Can be submitted electronically using the attached form.)
- 2) **February 11-15** - Inquiries screened by Foundation and CNCS staff using selection criteria outlined below.
- 3) **February 15** - Applications invited of selected inquiries.
- 4) **February 29** - Project applications due in Foundation office.
- 5) **March 7** - Final project site selections announced.
- 6) **March 12** - Project managers of approved sites attend training at the Foundation on measuring performance and developing an outcome-based VISTA work plan.
- 7) **March 31** - Final work plans due in Foundation office.

Questions can be directed to:

Chris Fastner at 320.631.2002 or cfastner@ifound.org.

Mission and Program Goals

AmeriCorps*VISTA (Volunteers In Service To America), the domestic equivalent to the Peace Corps, is a national service program sponsored by the federal government offering members a modest monthly living allowance and additional benefits in exchange for their commitment to a year of working to strengthen communities and improve the lives of people in need.

AmeriCorps*VISTA Mission

AmeriCorps*VISTA builds the organizational capacity of eligible organizations and designated projects to help them more effectively bring individuals and communities out of poverty.

Initiative Foundation Mission

The mission of the Initiative Foundation is - *To unlock the power of Central Minnesota people to build and sustain healthy communities.*

Initiative Foundation AmeriCorps*VISTA Program Goals

AmeriCorps*VISTA members help organizations create organizational capacity needed to combat poverty in their communities.

All Project Sites must clearly demonstrate that they have the capacity to support the efforts of the AmeriCorps*VISTA and must clearly identify how the project will contribute to permanently removing or keeping people out of poverty. The activity may be part of a process to help people out of poverty over a long period of time, but it must be backed up by definitive research and/or provide links programmatically to other related components.

A goal for every AmeriCorps*VISTA project is to ensure the sustainability of the project by the sponsoring agency and the community after AmeriCorps*VISTA project sponsorship ends.

Initiative Foundation AmeriCorps*VISTA projects support the missions and program priorities of the Initiative Foundation and AmeriCorps*VISTA.

Summary of Member Terms, Conditions & Benefits

AmeriCorps*VISTA members receive a living allowance (approx. \$865/month), approved personal and sick leave, medical coverage, training, and a choice of an education award (\$4,725) or end-of-year cash stipend (\$1,200) in exchange for a year of full-time service, all of which are supported by a grant from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). AmeriCorps*VISTA is a national service commitment under the AmeriCorps family of programs. AmeriCorps*VISTA members serve full-time and should be available for evening and weekend project needs. Accordingly, they are not permitted to hold part-time jobs or attend college while in service.

Expectations of Project Sites

- Active recruitment, effective interviewing and thorough checking of references for AmeriCorps*VISTA applicants. (The Initiative Foundation will assist you in various ways with this process.)
- AmeriCorps*VISTA applicants must be approved by the Initiative Foundation and CNCS before they can be accepted into service. Applicants must also attend a four-day Pre-Service Orientation before they can begin their service.
- **Attendance at required AmeriCorps*VISTA Supervisor Training for new supervisors.** This is a requirement of CNCS and intended for the benefit of supervisors to help assure maximum satisfaction with the VISTA experience for all parties.

- Regular and active involvement of an effective supervisor in the VISTA's work.

NOTE: Supervisor involvement is a key determinant of a successful AmeriCorps*VISTA placement. Please consider this carefully.

- Meaningful work for the AmeriCorps*VISTA member in accordance with a fully-developed, outcome-based work plan that will be mutually agreed upon by the Project Site, AmeriCorps*VISTA Member, the Initiative Foundation and CNCS as part of the application.
- A comfortable work environment at the organization's office (working from home is not an option), including reasonable office space, use of a computer and fax, phone and email access, comparable to that of paid staff.
- Completion of quarterly progress reports in a timely manner throughout the service year for each AmeriCorps*VISTA member.
- Attendance at required trainings/meetings for supervisors and AmeriCorps*VISTAs.
- Payment for trainings and related expenses required by the Project Site.
- Reimbursement of service-related mileage expenses beyond any mileage funds available from the Initiative Foundation.

- Assistance to the AmeriCorps*VISTA member in locating housing, if necessary. Although no cash transfers to AmeriCorps*VISTA members to help with housing are allowed, in-kind housing or other assistance is permissible and encouraged.
- Share cost of participation in AmeriCorps*VISTA with Initiative Foundation according to the following schedule.
 - First year, no cost share.
 - Second year, \$2,500 cost share.
 - Third year, \$5,000 cost share.
 - Fourth year, full cost share currently at \$10,380 (this amount could be increased to accommodate a modest cost of living increase).

Selection Criteria

Proposals will be judged against the following criteria:

1. The extent to which the project supports the Initiative Foundation and AmeriCorps*VISTA missions, goals and program requirements.
2. Demonstration by organization that they have the ability to provide effective supervision and a supportive and appropriate work environment.
3. Approval of Project Application with outcome-based work plan.

Preference will be given to:

- Existing Initiative Foundation AmeriCorps*VISTA Project Sites that have demonstrated progress towards their identified work plan goals and that have successfully met the requirements of the program.
- Project Sites that are currently or have been active participants in other Initiative Foundation efforts (including the Healthy Organization Partnership, Healthy Community Partnership, Early Childhood or Methamphetamine Coalitions, etc.) and, within the context of these programs, want to more directly address the needs of community members in poverty.
- Faith-based initiatives, financial literacy and financial asset-building efforts, and projects designed to increase civic engagement of recent immigrants.

Timeline (dates subject to change):

January - March –

- Inquiries from potential project sites accepted & screened.
- Applications invited & sites selected from among applicants.
- VISTA member recruiting begins.

March 12 - VISTA 101 / Member Recruitment and Performance Measurement/Work Plan Development Training for Project Supervisors

May 14 - Last day of priority recruiting period for existing Project Sites.

June 20 - Final deadline for submitting recommendation of AmeriCorps*VISTA candidates.

June 30 – Final day for approval of recommended VISTA candidates.

August 4-7 - Supervisor Training and Pre-Service Orientation for AmeriCorps*VISTAs.

August 8 – Start of VISTA service term.

Note: In order to fill all available volunteer placements, there will likely be more potential Project Sites recruiting than there are available positions. The first Project Sites to find suitable candidates, submit the necessary paperwork, and have their candidates reviewed and accepted by the Initiative Foundation and CNCS, will gain final acceptance into the program. (Existing Project Sites are given first priority through May 16th.)