

2017-2018 FAQs: VISTA Summer Associate Program

Q1: What are the priority focus areas for Housing Action's VISTA Summer Associate Program?

- Senior and Youth Hunger.
- Youth Summer Educational Programming.
- Economic Opportunities (Asset Development, Financial Literacy, Community Economic Development, Housing, & Employment).

Q2: What is the difference between the VISTA Summer Associate Program and the regular VISTA Program?

Housing Action is offering two VISTA programs this year. Our regular VISTAs serve Housing Action member organizations for a 12-month period of service and are not allowed to engage in direct service.

VISTA Summer Associates serve Housing Action members' organizations for 10-weeks during the summer. **They are allowed to engage in direct service.** Assignments may involve academic tutoring; building a home; recruiting and training community volunteers; teaching job skills; establishing partnerships with local businesses, organizations, churches, and schools; planning community meetings; or handling public relations.

In exchange for their service, VISTAs in both programs receive a modest living allowance and have the option to choose an end of service stipend or Segal AmeriCorps Education Award.

Q3: What is the selection criteria for Housing Action VISTA Summer Associate host sites?

- Quality of the VISTA project including the following:
 - The project adheres to AmeriCorps VISTA program guidelines.
 - The sustainability and impact of the project.
 - The project will attract a strong pool of VISTA candidates.
- Capacity of the organization to be a host site.
- Must be a member of Housing Action Illinois

For more information on membership, you can visit www.housingactionil.org/who-we-are/members.

Q4: My organization currently hosts a full year VISTA member. Can we host a VISTA Summer Associate too?

- Yes, you can. Your organization can host a VISTA Summer Associate to focus on a different aspect of your organization than your full year VISTA, and a VISTA Summer Associate can complement the same project your full year VISTA is focusing on.

Q5: What is the timeline for the application process?

- Application Deadline - March 21th
- Latest Notification of Acceptance - March 28th
- Executed Agreements Submission - April 3rd
- Recruitment and Interviews - April through the end of May
- (Approx.) VISTA Pre Service Orientation - June 5th
- (Approx.) VISTA First Day at Host Site - June 6th
- (Approx.) VISTA Last Day at Host Site – August 11th

Q6: How many VISTA Summer Associates can I apply for?

You may apply for as many VISTA members as your organization has the capacity to support and supervise, however, placement of each VISTA position will be individually determined so you may be awarded all, none or some of the VISTA members you apply for.

Q7: How does my organization benefit from participating as a VISTA Project Host Site?

Your organization receives the opportunity to recruit a VISTA Summer Associate(s) to work with you to build capacity in your organization and help communities to ameliorate issues related to poverty. AmeriCorps VISTA members receive a living allowance from the federal government of approximately \$990 – 1,026/month and a post service education award of \$1,230 or a cash stipend of \$230 upon completion of a term of service.

Q8: Will I get guidance throughout the summer about the VISTA program?

Yes, Housing Action Illinois will provide the following:

- Pre-Service Orientation (PSO) for VISTA Summer Associates and a training on supervision for host site supervisors provided by Housing Action.
- Reports and check-ins conducted by VISTA Leaders and Housing Action staff.
- Assistance with recruitment and selection of VISTA Summer Associates.

Q9: What costs does the Project Host Site need to cover?

- Travel reimbursement to VISTA for any project-related travel.
- Reimbursement of Chicago Transit Authority/Metra pass if Project Host Site is located in Chicago Metro region (six-collar counties).
- In-kind office requirements: office space, desk, computer, phone line, email, etc.
- There are other in-kind donations such as housing or housing assistance, opportunities for professional development, etc. These items are not required, but are encouraged as they drastically increase the number and quality of VISTA applicants.
- Project Participation Fee to Housing Action Illinois; \$500 per VISTA Summer Associate during the summer of 2017. The Project Participation Fee helps offset administrative expenses for the project.

Q10: How can I best utilize my VISTA Summer Associate?

A VISTA Summer Associate should be used to enable your organization to address a need(s) within the community that would otherwise not be accomplished due to lack of time, resources, energy or structural conduciveness. Once the need has been identified the host site can structure the VISTA's Assignment Description to best build the capacity of a program or initiative that will continue to address the need after the VISTA Summer Associate's term has ended.

Q11: Can our VISTA Summer Associate have a part-time job?

Yes, all outside employment must be approved by CNCS and must not conflict with VISTA assignment.

Q12: What activities are inappropriate for a Summer VISTA to do?

A VISTA Summer Associate cannot:

- Be involved with political advocacy, religious instruction, voter registration, union organizing, or lobbying while serving or identifying as a VISTA member.
- Receive monetary contribution from host organization to supplement their stipend.
- Enroll in credit-bearing courses during their term without approval from CNCS.
- Displace the work, or what should be the work, of paid employees of the host organization, particularly tasks typically reserved for administrative and/or clerical positions. VISTA Summer Associates are to engage in project-based work. Note: The VISTA member is not an administrative assistant.

***If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Tanya Burgess and Willie Heineke at 312-939-6074 ext. 107 or vista@housingactionil.org*