



Housing Action AmeriCorps Network

2024-2025
Host Site Application
Resources Packet



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A Note from the National Service Team

At [Housing Action Illinois](#), we believe housing is a human right and recognize that accessing housing is a matter of racial and economic justice. We want our communities to thrive, and that starts with everyone having a safe, stable place to call home. Our statewide coalition, which currently unites 160+ organizations, has been dedicated to expanding and protecting the availability of quality, affordable housing in Illinois for more than 35 years.

We are facing a nationwide housing crisis, and local organizations are trying to meet growing needs with limited staff and resources. At the same time, new voices are struggling to break into the housing and community development field without relevant leadership experience. The Housing Action AmeriCorps Network addresses these challenges by helping organizations tackle new projects while providing professional development for the next generation of housing justice leaders.

Since 2010, the [Housing Action AmeriCorps Network](#) has connected hundreds of AmeriCorps members in the VISTA program with community organizations across Illinois (and beyond). From launching new programs to galvanizing volunteers and donors, AmeriCorps members leave a lasting impact with the organizations and communities they serve. In just the past year, AmeriCorps members enabled our coalition to provide housing services to 12,000 households; develop and repair 5,200 affordable homes; engage 200 volunteers; and leverage \$170,000 in grants, donations, and in-kind contributions.

This packet provides resources, guidance, and examples to support you in preparing an application to host an AmeriCorps member in our network. Contact the National Service Team at americorps@housingactionil.org for assistance with your application.

We look forward to working with you and seeing your AmeriCorps project proposal!

Sincerely,

Housing Action Illinois – National Service Team

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Overview of Housing Action Illinois & AmeriCorps

Terminology

- **Housing Action** is our shortened way of referring to Housing Action Illinois
- **AmeriCorps member** refers to individuals serving in our AmeriCorps network
- **VISTA program (VISTA - Volunteers in Service to America)** refers to the specific AmeriCorps program that members of our network serve through
- **Host site** refers to a community organization where an AmeriCorps member is serving; IL host sites are also **member organizations** of Housing Action's coalition
- **Capacity building** is how we describe the activities of an AmeriCorps member; projects should focus on helping an organization increase resources for and expand the scale, reach, efficiency, and/or effectiveness of their services
- AmeriCorps VISTA projects involve **indirect service** to support organizational staff and volunteers, rather than providing services directly to community members

About AmeriCorps

AmeriCorps, the federal agency for national service and volunteerism, provides opportunities for Americans to serve their country domestically, address the nation's most pressing challenges, improve lives and communities, and strengthen civic engagement. Learn more at [AmeriCorps.gov](https://www.americorps.gov).

AmeriCorps VISTA is an AmeriCorps program that connects AmeriCorps members to community organizations to fight poverty. Through fundraising, volunteer recruitment, program development, and more, members gain skills that put them on track for a life of service in the public, nonprofit, or private sector.

To avoid confusion when referring to AmeriCorps, always use the following guidance:

- Capitalize the A and C, without a middle space, so it reads **AmeriCorps**
- Use **AmeriCorps member** when referring to individuals serving in the AmeriCorps VISTA program; do not capitalize the m in member
- Use **"selected to serve"** as an AmeriCorps member, not *"hired to work"*
- AmeriCorps members are dedicated to a year of **national service**; they are not *"interns"* or *"assistants"*

About Housing Action Illinois

Housing Action Illinois is a statewide coalition that leads the movement to expand and protect affordable housing and end homelessness in Illinois. We bring together more than 160 member organizations—including housing counseling agencies, homeless services providers, housing developers, and policymakers—to work toward a state where everyone has a good, stable home. We create access and housing opportunities for communities throughout Illinois by advocating for better policies, raising awareness, training member organizations, and spearheading statewide collaboration.

The **Housing Action AmeriCorps Network** is an AmeriCorps grantee that receives funds to support full-year and summer* AmeriCorps members in the VISTA program. Our AmeriCorps members primarily focus on projects related to housing and homelessness, but may also support projects that intersect with housing, such as education, hunger, health care, environment, and disaster services. The majority of our network serves within and throughout Illinois; the exception is that AmeriCorps members in our Housing Counseling Corps can be matched with housing counseling programs nationwide.

Housing Counseling Corps is an initiative of the Housing Action AmeriCorps Network that aims to build the capacity of housing counseling programs and establish a path for AmeriCorps members to become HUD-Certified housing counselors. Launched in 2021, AmeriCorps members in the Housing Counseling Corps spend their service learning about the housing counseling profession, becoming familiar with the specific programs and needs of a housing counseling agency, and preparing for the HUD Housing Counseling Certification Exam. Housing Counseling Corps members serve with housing counseling agencies in Illinois and throughout the United States.

**Due to federal budget restrictions, the AmeriCorps VISTA Summer Associate program will not be offered in the 2024-2025 cycle.*

Quick Links

- [Housing Action AmeriCorps Network](#)
- [Housing Action Illinois Newsletter Sign-Up](#)
- [2024-2025 Host Site Application](#)
 - [Supplemental Document](#)

Host Site Requirements

Host Site Eligibility

- AmeriCorps host sites must be a nonprofit organization, government agency, Native community, or public educational institution
- Host sites based in Illinois must be current members or willing to become [members of Housing Action's coalition](#)
- Host sites outside of Illinois are only eligible to submit project applications for the Housing Counseling Corps

Host Site Responsibilities

- AmeriCorps members must be able to serve full-time (35 hours per week) with the organization and remain focused on their AmeriCorps project goals
- AmeriCorps members must be provided with a dedicated work space and any equipment necessary to complete their project (such as a computer, email address, and phone)
- Host sites must designate at least one Recruiter who is available to market the position and interview candidates during the recruitment period (March-August)
- Host sites must designate at least one Supervisor who is available on a weekly basis to provide coaching and training to the AmeriCorps member

Financial Commitments

Project Participation Fee	Housing Action Membership <i>Illinois-based organizations</i>	Supplemental Benefit <i>strongly encouraged</i>
\$6,500-8,000 per position	\$50-300 per year	\$300-500 per month

Project Participation Fee: These fees help Housing Action cover administrative expenses, program cost shares, and expenses for the trainings and activities we offer AmeriCorps members and supervisors. Organizations only pay participation fees if they successfully recruit their position; no fees are due if the position is not recruited.

2024-2025 Participation Fees:

- Illinois Organizations: \$6,500 per position**
- Non-Illinois Organizations: \$8,000 per position*

*Non-IL organizations are only eligible to apply for the Housing Counseling Corps

****2024 Host Site Scholarship:** Organizations based in central and southern Illinois are eligible to apply for a reduced participation fee (\$4,000 per position). [Submit a scholarship application »](#)

Supplemental Benefits: We strongly encourage providing supplemental benefits when possible. Host sites are not allowed to provide direct cash payments to AmeriCorps members, but they *are* able to issue reimbursements or payments to providers for costs of living (housing, utilities, transportation, food). The most common supplemental benefit is a monthly housing stipend, which host sites pay directly to the AmeriCorps member's landlord or property management. Host sites have also offered benefits like free housing at a unit managed by the organization and gift cards for grocery stores and gas stations.

Service-Related Travel: Host sites based in the Chicago Metro Area must provide monthly transportation passes (CTA Ventra, Metra, etc.) or reimburse public transportation costs for AmeriCorps members. Host sites outside of Chicago should consider if they are able to offer supplemental benefits to support the member's commute (such as a gas card). All host sites must cover transportation costs for any necessary travel for their service outside of their daily commute (for example, if they are required to attend a training or conference).

Application Timeline

- **January 26** – Host site applications close
- **February** – Application feedback rounds & submission to AmeriCorps
- **March-July** – Recruitment & interviews
- **August 12 or August 26** – AmeriCorps members start

Housing Action will review each application and provide feedback on your AmeriCorps project and work plan in February. We will also draft an opportunity listing based on your application to promote your position on the My AmeriCorps portal. Organizations are responsible for making timely edits based on this feedback.

In early March, we will submit updated projects for final approval through the Midwest Regional Office of AmeriCorps. Once approved by AmeriCorps, Housing Action will post positions online and guide organizations in starting the recruitment process. Interviews are typically scheduled in May-July. Invoices for project participation fees are sent after successful recruitment.

AmeriCorps members in our network typically start in August, which best aligns with our

onboarding and training schedule. In 2024, AmeriCorps offers the following start dates: August 12 and August 26. In extenuating circumstances, we will allow members to start earlier on one of the following dates: July 29, July 15, or June 17.

AmeriCorps Member Benefits

AmeriCorps members are eligible to receive benefits from the VISTA program, including:

- **Living Allowance:** \$22,882 per year, distributed biweekly (\$877.66)
- **End of Service Award (Choice of One):**
 - Segal AmeriCorps Education Award: \$6,895 for past/future education costs
 - End of Service Cash Stipend: \$1,803
- **Leave:** 10 personal days & 10 medical leave days
- **Healthcare Benefits:** special enrollment period for the Health Insurance Marketplace, AmeriCorps VISTA Healthcare Allowance or Health Benefit Plan
- **Childcare Benefits:** supports childcare costs (age 13 or younger) during service
- **Relocation Assistance:** mileage reimbursement and settling-in allowance (\$750), if the AmeriCorps member relocates 50+ miles for service
- **Loan Forbearance & Deferment:** federal student loans may be eligible for forbearance or deferment during service; AmeriCorps also counts toward the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program (PSLF)
- **Non-Competitive Eligibility Status:** 1 year of non-competitive eligibility for employment in the federal government

The Housing Action AmeriCorps Network also provides the following benefits:

- **In-Service Trainings:** held in the fall and spring, AmeriCorps members attend multi-day trainings to develop skills that prepare them for a successful service year and help them secure their next professional endeavor after their term ends
- **Professional Development & Networking:** attendance at events for AmeriCorps cohort and Housing Action coalition; registration fees waived for the Housing Matters Conference and Toast to Housing Justice Benefit; free and discounted trainings (including the Housing Counseling Career Path & fair housing)
- **Chicago Furniture Bank Partnership:** AmeriCorps members in Chicago and collar counties may receive low-cost furnishings (bed, desk, couch, tables) from the Chicago Furniture Bank at any point during service

Acceptable Service Activities

Serving as an AmeriCorps member is different from being hired as a paid employee. AmeriCorps members serve with an organization full-time for a 1-year term and focus on a particular project that reduces the impact of poverty in the community. AmeriCorps projects aim to build the capacity of local organizations to meet community needs by enhancing systems, resources, and strategies, rather than providing direct services. This could involve building relationships with new partners; improving data collection and management; designing a new program; or increasing available resources, such as recruiting volunteers, fundraising, or writing grants. Due to their participation in a federal program, AmeriCorps members are subject to certain regulations, including limitations on religious and political activities. For more information on restricted activities, refer to the [AmeriCorps Member Handbook \(pg. 108-113\)](#).

The chart below outlines some acceptable indirect service activities and highlights strategies that would ensure the activities build the capacity of and are sustainable for the organization. As you prepare your host site application, and the VISTA Assignment Description in particular, this chart can be a helpful reference.

Indirect Service Activity	Capacity Building Activity	Sustainable Activity
Recruit volunteers	Develop sign-up forms & assignment descriptions	Create volunteer handbook, secure new volunteer partnerships
Train service providers	Develop training curriculum & presentation	Create train-the-trainer manual
Coordinate a pilot project	Develop procedures & systems, collect community feedback	Create project manual, secure grants & donations, train volunteers & staff
Conduct outreach	Develop outreach strategy, design materials, coordinate events	Train volunteers to conduct outreach, secure community partnerships
Enhance marketing	Develop press kits & communications materials, create social media plan	Secure media partners, create story bank, train staff on social media
Organize fundraising event	Develop donor database, write grants, create system for in-kind donations	Create grant database, secure development staff, train volunteers

Writing a Strong Host Site Application

Organizations may apply to host an AmeriCorps member with the Housing Action AmeriCorps Network between December and February each year. The host site application consists of two parts:

1. [Host Site Application Form](#)
2. [Supplemental Document](#)

Host Site Application Form - Sections 1-5

To prepare your host site application, review the [application questions](#) and download the Supplemental Document. It is recommended that you complete the Supplemental Document prior to fully submitting the application form, as you are prompted to upload the document in Section 6. The application form should save your responses, but it is best practice to write your answers in a separate document as a back-up.

Sections 1-5 of the application form ask for information about your organization, the staff involved with the AmeriCorps project, and the resources you have available for hosting an AmeriCorps member (such as equipment and a dedicated workspace). You will need to indicate the staff who will be responsible for recruiting the position and supervising the AmeriCorps member. You will also need to determine if your organization is able to provide supplemental benefits for the position.

Supplemental Document

The Supplemental Document provides information about the community served by your organization, the evidence that your proposed project will meet community needs, and the expected work plan for the AmeriCorps member. Responses provided in the Supplemental Document will be submitted for approval by the federal agency of AmeriCorps. Examples of supplemental documents are included in the [Appendix](#).

Community Needs Statement

Answers to this section are often similar to statements provided in grant applications and progress reports. This is your opportunity to show why your community and organization requires the support of an AmeriCorps member and why the project you have in mind will be effective. Keep in mind that AmeriCorps VISTA projects must focus on indirect service and capacity building activities, with the ultimate goal of alleviating poverty in your community.

Question 1 – Your answer should describe the communities served by your organization, noting any particular community groups that will be impacted by your AmeriCorps project. It should indicate any gaps in services and resources available locally, as well as any growing needs specific to the region and communities served. Cite current, relevant, community-level data in your response, as you might for an academic research paper. Commonly referenced data sources include:

- NLIHC – [Out of Reach](#) & [The Gap](#)
- [Local Continuum of Care](#) & [Point-in-Time Count](#)
- [State of Rental Housing in Chicago](#)
- [U.S. Census Bureau](#)
- Quality of Life Plans or Community Surveys

Question 2 – Your answer should detail evidence that shows two things: 1. why the approach of your project will be successful in building the capacity of your organization, and 2. how the project will reduce poverty in your community. Evidence could include data from your organization (such as program outcomes or a strategic plan), or from organizations that have carried out similar projects in other communities. Consider including research that connects your project focus to poverty alleviation. For example, a project focused on expanding a housing counseling program might consider citing evidence that access to housing counseling services improves financial security and economic mobility.

VISTA Assignment Description

The VISTA Assignment Description (VAD) outlines the primary goals of the project and provides a structured work plan for the AmeriCorps member. VADs have three main components: Goal Statement, Objectives, and Member Activities.

Goal Statement – Your goal statement will establish the overall direction and long-term goals of the project. Long-term goals are not always achieved within the one-year service term and should relate to poverty alleviation. Goal statements can follow this structure:

1. **Introduce your organization, mission, & service area** (1-2 sentences) – if your project is focused on a particular program or community, be sure to describe this
2. **Describe the project & how it will meet community needs** (1-2 sentences) – it should be clear what your AmeriCorps member will accomplish and how this project will help your organization serve the community in new ways

3. **State how the project helps break the cycle of poverty** (1 sentence) – clarify the connection between the expected outcomes of the project and how they will further the long-term economic stability of your community

Objectives – Describe the short-term outcomes and milestones that the AmeriCorps member will accomplish throughout the service term. Objectives must communicate a specific timeframe for implementation and indicate measurable results when possible (for example, develop relationships with 10 organizations). Objectives should remain focused on capacity building and build to achieve the long-term goals outlined in the Goal Statement.

Member Activities – Describe the specific strategy, steps, and process the AmeriCorps member will follow to complete the indicated objectives. Activities should indicate measurable results when possible and include any actions that will make the project sustainable for the organization after their service term ends (for example, create a program manual and train 2 staff).

AmeriCorps members receive a copy of their VAD at the beginning of their service. When reviewing the VAD as a whole, it should be clear to the AmeriCorps member what they will be expected to do and when they should plan to start and finish each objective. The last objective included on the Supplemental Document should not be changed; Housing Action requires a professional development objective on every VAD.

VADs may be changed after the AmeriCorps member starts with approval from Housing Action and AmeriCorps. Typically a VAD is changed if an organization's needs have significantly shifted, a new opportunity arises, or the AmeriCorps member brings a set of skills the organization did not expect.

A Note on VAD Language

A common mistake when writing a VAD is framing the position's responsibilities and goals as "assisting" a staff member in implementing a program or taking over administrative roles to free up staff time. AmeriCorps members should not be assigned administrative tasks that are unrelated to capacity building and accomplishing their AmeriCorps project. When writing the VAD, avoid verbs like "help" or "assist." Instead, consider using active verbs, such as:

Analyze	Assess	Build	Collect	Communicate
Compile	Coordinate	Create	Design	Develop

Distribute	Engage	Ensure	Establish	Evaluate
Generate	Identify	Implement	Improve	Launch
Market	Measure	Monitor	Plan	Present
Promote	Recommend	Recruit	Refine	Research
Secure	Suggest	Update	Use	Write

Host Site Application Form - Sections 6-8

These sections on the application form provide additional information about how your AmeriCorps project will build your organization's capacity, what measurable data your AmeriCorps member will track and report during their term, and who your ideal candidate is for the project.

Section 6: AmeriCorps Project Information – When you check activities for project sustainability (manual, training, etc.) and community involvement (survey, advisory board, etc.), make sure they are included in the member activities on the VAD.

Section 7: Project Measurements & Outcomes – Housing Action is responsible for regularly reporting project measurements, outcomes, and narratives to the federal agency of AmeriCorps at several points during the service term. AmeriCorps members complete monthly reports that track this data through the platform, America Learns.

Host sites must select at least three impact measurements that the AmeriCorps member will track and report on each month. The application form lists general, capacity building impact measurements, as well as breaks out impact measurements by project focus (Housing, Education, Healthy Futures, Environment, Disaster Services). You must select at least one measurement from the category of your project focus. The remaining two measurements may be from the Capacity Building category and/or your project focus category. Numbers indicated in this section should also be reflected in the VAD. Learn more about [AmeriCorps VISTA project measurements](#).

You also need to indicate your specific plans for tracking the impact measurements. The form includes a list of commonly used tools and systems for data collection (such as surveys, sign-in sheets, or databases), but you should share any additional strategies that are specific to your project, organization, or community.

Section 8: Candidate Information – Consider what interpersonal and technical skills would be helpful for the role, as well as what personal characteristics fit best with your organization’s culture and the supervisor’s communication style. Answers in this section help Housing Action prepare to recruit your position. During feedback rounds, Housing Action will work with you to create an opportunity listing to promote your position on the My AmeriCorps Portal. Explore [AmeriCorps opportunity listings](#) for inspiration.

Appendix

Examples of Community Needs Statements

Note: Organization names have been changed for all examples.

Example 1

1. Using cited evidence, describe the community your AmeriCorps project will serve and the community needs addressed by this work.

Affordable Housing Partners' primary service area, Lake County, is a community of extremes. It has some of the wealthiest communities in Illinois as well as some of the poorest – sometimes immediately next door to one another (i.e. Lake Forest and North Chicago). Due to the high cost of housing, 51% of renters and 37% of homeowners were already housing cost burdened before the pandemic according to the Lake County Consolidated Plan. Those numbers have only become worse as a result of COVID-19. An unprecedented number of tenants and homeowners now need assistance understanding their rights, negotiating with landlords and lenders, accessing rental and mortgage assistance programs, and navigating the scary and confusing eviction and foreclosure processes. The AmeriCorps member will help AHP build its long-term capacity to serve low-income residents in need of stable housing.

2. Using cited evidence, describe how the approach you are taking in this project will enhance your organization and alleviate poverty in your community.

According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, homebuyers who use HUD-Approved Housing Counseling, like AHP, have 30% lower odds of foreclosure and are 283% more likely to receive a loan modification if they do get into trouble. Locally, we know that approximately 50% of clients participating in our foreclosure prevention program successfully receive a loan modification or other resolution to keep their home – reducing the devastating impacts that foreclosures have on families and communities. Housing is more than a roof over your head – safe, stable housing that one can afford is the foundation for success. Without it, everything else falls apart.

Example 2

1. Using cited evidence, describe the community your AmeriCorps project will serve and the community needs addressed by this work.

Macomb Community Center is based in Macomb, a rural city in McDonough County, Illinois. One of our primary goals is to eliminate homelessness from our community and to increase access to safe, affordable housing for all.

According to the US Census, Macomb's poverty rate of 27% is more than double the statewide rate. Macomb's population is 84% White, 9% Black or African American, 4% two or more races, and 3% Asian. The impact of poverty is incredibly challenging for single moms and people of color. In April 2022, the City of Macomb and IHDA conducted a *Housing Needs Assessment & Community Revitalization Plan*, which found that the rate of poverty among Black or African American and Hispanic/Latinx residents in Macomb is more than double the rate of Illinois. Additionally, 21% of families with children and an astounding 46.9% of single, female-led families with children were living in poverty.

The hourly wage needed to rent a 2-bedroom apartment in Illinois is above today's minimum wage of \$13/hour (\$14.13/hour or \$29,400/year), according to *Out of Reach 2022: Illinois* by the National Low Income Housing Coalition. When households contribute more than 30% of their income towards housing costs (including mortgage/rent, utilities, etc.), they are considered "cost-burdened." The *Housing Needs Assessment & Community Revitalization Plan* found that the largest share of Macomb's households (18%) earns less than \$10,000 and over half (54%) of Macomb's renters (who make up nearly 50% of residents) are cost-burdened. In 2019, 26.0% of Macomb's housing units were vacant, so now is an opportune time for residents to remain or gain housing.

2. Using cited evidence, describe how the approach you are taking in this project will enhance your organization and alleviate poverty in your community.

Homelessness has been described as the consequence of an individual losing their last supportive relationship. When relationships are intact, they provide access to couches, a hot meal, a ride, mental wellness, and job references. Macomb Community Center wants to offer additional resources and relationships which can increase resilience and facilitate moving out of poverty. We believe relationships are a vital component.

We have identified two research-backed programs and have engaged those who have implemented them. The first is the Open Table (OT) model of supporting transformational change, <<http://www.theopentable.org>>, in which volunteers develop long-term, reciprocal relationships with an individual or family. Tables meet weekly to

share friendships and access social networks to support the implementation of the friend's goals.

The second is the Family Dinner Project (FDP), which "champions meals as an opportunity for family members to connect through food, fun, and conversation about things that matter." Decades of scientific research show the physical, mental, and academic benefits of shared meals. Research links family meals with healthier eating habits, lower rates of substance abuse, higher self-esteem, resilience, and a more positive outlook (See, <<https://mghcme.org/sprig/the-family-dinner-project/>>). Before the pandemic, Macomb Community Center hosted a monthly community meal in which recipients also served as leaders, and the usual socio-economic barriers were crossed to create a communal dynamic, instead of one that relied on the roles of service providers and recipients. Macomb Community Center's FDP will focus on "families of choice or chance" and adaptations for working families living in poverty, households with a single adult, and other barriers that are a reality for our families.

Example 3

1. Using cited evidence, describe the community your AmeriCorps project will serve and the community needs addressed by this work.

Nevada Legal Collective (NLC) is a statewide, nonprofit law firm that serves low-income residents throughout Nevada. This project will serve low-income clients in the Las Vegas Valley that are facing foreclosure. According to World Population Review, the poverty rate in Las Vegas for 2023 is at 18.33%. While the poverty rate increased across all racial groups in Las Vegas, the sharpest increase was among the area's black population, with a poverty rate now over 25%.

According to Attom, home foreclosure filings (including default notices, bank repossessions, and scheduled auctions) were up 153% in the first half of 2022 compared to the same period in 2021. "Nevada is second only to Illinois in the number of mortgage defaults." In Nevada one in every 2,473 housing units is in the foreclosure process. In Nevada, foreclosures rose by 146.3%, from 917 in the first six months of 2021 to 2,259 in the first half of 2022. According to Nevada Current, the Las Vegas Valley had 470 properties in foreclosure in September 2022, up 66% from a year ago and up 37% from last month.

The rising mortgage foreclosure crisis in Las Vegas is a legal crisis. Many homeowners lose their homes because they lack the ability to navigate lending laws and too few are too poor to obtain qualified legal assistance. This project will help tenants and

homeowners identify violations of state and federal laws, enforce consumer protection laws, and advance defenses that can inspire leaders to agree on sustainable loan terms or slow foreclosure proceedings.

2. Using cited evidence, describe how the approach you are taking in this project will enhance your organization and alleviate poverty in your community.

This project will increase NLC's ability to fight poverty by keeping people in their homes, which is often the only significant asset of low-income families. This will also prevent homelessness and stop blight in low-income affected communities. NLC had a housing counseling program in the past that assisted homeowners avoid foreclosure, but the funding priorities shifted and the focus centered on eviction prevention during COVID. Since foreclosures have accelerated considerably in Las Vegas over the past 2 years, NLC wants to revamp the foreclosure counseling project. NLC has used VISTAs in the past and understands the program management aspect. VISTAs will aid in the project by researching demographic information of homeowners facing foreclosure as well as the neighborhoods most impacted. They will survey community members to develop and implement an outreach plan to educate and assist homeowners about ways to avoid foreclosure and provide financial literacy education. Finally, they will evaluate increases in cases staff handle and measure outcomes and effectiveness of the outreach plan and project in general. In addition to past performance for this program and working with VISTAs in the past, NLC has researched other legal aid programs that used VISTAs for this type of program. Prairie State Legal Services VISTA members created a mortgage foreclosure help desk at an Illinois courthouse that provided information to more than 1,500 people. Family Services, located in South Carolina, has used VISTAs to build capacity and assist in foreclosure prevention. Both of these programs were successful and NLC will reach out to discuss their successes and their suggestions to make the program at NLC efficient and effective for clients needing foreclosure assistance in the Las Vegas Valley.

Examples of VISTA Assignment Descriptions (VAD)

AmeriCorps Position Title: Communications and Resource Development VISTA
Host Organization: Midwest Alliance to End Homelessness

VISTA Assignment Objectives and Member Activities

Goal of the Project (750 characters with spaces):

Our region is dealing with housing insecurity for homeowners and stretched demand for rental housing. Midwest Alliance to End Homelessness (MAEH) works to alleviate poverty through housing-related services and public advocacy. The Communications and Resource Development VISTA will help us communicate with our partners, community stakeholders, and funders by developing print and digital materials, as well as aid us in building our capacity and influence by cultivating supporters, expanding our outreach, and diversifying our resources.

Objective of the Assignment (1,000 characters with spaces):**08/15/21-08/15/22**

Work with Communications Manager and Staff to expand and develop communications materials (print and digital) that will raise MAEH's profile, reinforce member and donor involvement, and educate and activate the public around ending homelessness and affordable housing.

Member Activities (2,500 characters with spaces):

1. Work with Communications Manager to assess our current digital content and strategy (email, website, and social media); help develop consistent branding and messaging across platforms.
2. Collaborate with staff to develop promotional materials as needed. Potentially contribute to publications like fact sheets, annual report, and email newsletters
3. Update social media content and strategize ways to expand to new audiences. Plan and launch a social media campaign for Affordable Housing Month and identify other events and awareness holidays with campaign potential. Create content for social media kits to share with our supporters.

4. Aid MAEH and our partner agencies in collecting stories that demonstrate our impact and explain our issues, as well as shaping and sharing those narratives with the public, funders, and policymakers.
5. Monitor media for housing-related news; help develop/execute media strategy and solidify a network of media contacts.

Objective of the Assignment (1,000 characters with spaces):

11/30/21-08/15/2022

Collaborate with staff and Board on campaign to gain 3,000 new MAEH Housing supporters, and cultivate them for increased future engagement.

Member Activities (2,500 characters with spaces):

1. Aid in planning and execution of email campaigns and in-person events intended to activate new supporters.
2. Help create welcome materials for new supporters that will raise their level of engagement.
3. Identify prospective partner organizations, develop a strategic plan for approaching them, and help create/test new welcome materials. Begin to implement a plan and revise as necessary.

Objective of the Assignment (1,000 characters with spaces):

10/15/21-06/15/2022

Work with the Executive Director, Board, and staff to expand and develop a resource base.

Member Activities (2,500 characters with spaces):

1. Research and produce summaries of potential funding sources. Investigate new foundations and initiatives that might fund our work; research fee-for-service models that other organizations have implemented, and then recommend strategies for MAEH.
2. Contribute to the development and editing of funding proposals.
3. Collaborate with Executive Director and Communications Manager on planning, implementing, and assessing new fundraising strategies
 - a. Plan and execute a #GivingTuesday campaign.
 - b. Investigate local business partnerships or sponsorships, recommend ones worth pursuing, and begin outreach to establish relationships.
 - c. Research and brainstorm ways to increase our individual donor base.

Objective of the Assignment (1,000 characters with spaces):

08/15/21-12/15/2022

Assess staff use of our database and email marketing system, then help establish streamlined processes for data collection, cleanup, maintenance, and integration.

Member Activities (2,500 characters with spaces):

1. Work with Communications Manager to assess current staff use and capabilities of our database and email system, as well as the state of current data.
2. Research and implement a plan for data cleanup, propose new procedures for data entry and relationship tracking, and help integrate the systems so that they work together.
3. Revising, building, and improving contact lists for community partners, media, and donors.

AmeriCorps Position Title: Housing Counseling Outreach VISTA
Host Organization: Housing Now

VISTA Assignment Objectives and Member Activities

Goal of the Project (750 characters with spaces):

Housing Now serves the far south suburbs of Chicago, in some of the communities most devastated by poverty, foreclosure, eviction and food insecurity throughout Chicagoland. This project will build Housing Now's Housing Counseling services (Pre-Purchase/Financial Literacy/Foreclosure Counseling) through enhancing the comprehensive outreach for our Housing Counseling programming through community events, social media, and other opportunities. The AmeriCorps member will ensure that the wider community is aware of the Housing Counseling services that Housing Now provides, which will further the long-term economic stability of households in the communities we serve.

Objective of the Assignment (1,000 characters with spaces):

09/15/2022-09/09/2023

Increase the number of households receiving housing counseling services to 200 households by enhancing our existing and creating new outreach and communication systems.

Member Activities (2,500 characters with spaces):

1. Generate Housing Counseling promotional materials, in conjunction with team and partners, for distribution at community events. Materials could include give- aways, pamphlets, and other items
2. Locate college fairs, farmers' markets, church events, town festivals or other events to distribute materials. Generate a list of events by 11/1/23.
3. With staff, promote Housing Now's Housing Counseling program at 2 community events per week, for a total of 100 events over the member's term.
4. By 11/1/23, create a guide for staff and volunteers for promoting the Housing Counseling program at events, including an updated list of events to distribute materials at, contact list for events, example materials to distribute, FAQ's, etc.

5. Collaborate with contracted outreach partners to deliver 1 post per week on social media platforms, including Facebook and Instagram.
6. Work with 5 local partner agencies to develop a system for Financial Literacy referrals.
7. Create a tracking process to determine how new clients find out about Housing Now's Housing Counseling services to identify effective outreach efforts and areas for improvement.
8. Create a tracking process to determine whether clients who indicate an interest in Housing Counseling services are entered into the Client Management System.

Objective of the Assignment (1,000 characters with spaces):

09/15/2022-09/09/2023

Reflect on and evaluate the progress and accomplishments from the previous objectives. Outline next steps for the projects including suggestions for how to maintain processes and track areas that may need regular updates.

Member Activities (2,500 characters with spaces):

1. Execute assessment and compile lessons learned for new systems.
2. Create proposal for continued maintenance and next steps.
3. Create and provide training and troubleshooting materials for use by staff and volunteers.
4. Create and present project progress to organization staff and board.

AmeriCorps Position Title: Program Development Associate VISTA
Host Organization: Southeast Supportive Housing

VISTA Assignment Objectives and Member Activities

Goal of the Project (750 characters with spaces):

Southeast Supportive Housing (SSH) provides permanent supportive housing for youth ages 18 – 24. Research shows that financial literacy builds the economic empowerment and self-sufficiency of youth. In 2021, SSH will launch a financial education program designed to provide supportive housing tenants with the basics of financial management, household finance, and banking. The VISTA member will design and implement the pilot program. In doing so, the VISTA will build a program that will help supportive housing tenants to break the cycle of poverty.

Objective of the Assignment (1,000 characters with spaces):

08/15/2021 – 12/15/2021

By December 2021, the VISTA will have conducted community outreach and finalized curriculum for a pilot Youth Financial Literacy Program.

Member Activities (2,500 characters with spaces):

1. The member will understand existing financial literacy program and conduct community outreach in support of a new Youth Education module.
 - a. Member will become familiar with agency services and work with management to assess the state of Financial Education programming.
 - b. Survey potential beneficiaries ages 18-24 with the purpose of identifying gaps in youth supportive services.
2. The VISTA member will research best practices and finalize existing curriculum based on findings and outreach survey.
 - a. Research best practices in Financial Literacy and Youth Supportive Services making any necessary updates to existing program materials.
 - b. Develop a manual for Youth Financial Education program administrators and Resident Leaders.
 - c. The member will finalize all service materials pending staff approval.

Objective of the Assignment (1,000 characters with spaces):**08/15/2021 – 12/15/2021**

By December 2021, The VISTA will create an advisory committee composed of SSH members and community partners in order to establish support and guide the direction of the Financial Education Program.

Member Activities (2,500 characters with spaces):

1. Create a database of current people and projects in financial literacy to track and gauge interest in program development.
 - a. VISTA member will identify and establish partnerships with 5 local financial institutions.
 - b. Create a tracking and coordination system to support regular communications and project updates.
2. During October and November 2021, plan and help facilitate at least five focus groups to gather input about potential program and direction.
3. Coordinate and help facilitate monthly advisory meetings throughout the year.

Objective of the Assignment (1,000 characters with spaces):**01/30/2022 – 08/15/2022**

Help modify pilot curriculum for Youth Financial Education Program for Summer 2022 in order to engage students learning and provide long term financial practices.

Member Activities (2,500 characters with spaces):

1. Meet with partner pilot classroom to monitor and gather feedback best fit for new curriculum.
2. Document feedback and best practices on shared resources folder.
3. Revise existing curriculum based on implementation feedback and conduct required research to support the finalization of program curriculum.
4. Present the status of the pilot Youth Financial Education program to advisory committee for review and approval.

Objective of the Assignment (1,000 characters with spaces):

01/30/2022 – 08/15/2022

The VISTA member will develop program administration guides and train one Youth Resident Leader to Facilitate Financial Services Curriculum.

Member Activities (2,500 characters with spaces):

1. VISTA will document program processes, update administrator's manual, and create presentations for training.
2. Work with program staff to identify candidates for program facilitation training.
3. Conduct one full training and certify a Resident Leader as a Youth Financial Education program facilitator.

AmeriCorps Position Title: Volunteer Recruitment & Management VISTA
Host Organization: Peoria Cares

VISTA Assignment Objectives and Member Activities

Goal of the Project (750 characters with spaces):

Peoria Cares provides holistic support to the individuals and families that are experiencing homelessness in the Peoria area to help these people break the cycle of homelessness and poverty. To help ensure that individuals and families that are experiencing homelessness receive the broad spectrum of support they need to break the cycle of poverty, the VISTA project will build the capacity of Peoria Cares by developing a sustainable volunteer recruitment and management system for its overnight emergency shelter program.

Objective of the Assignment (1,000 characters with spaces):

08/15/2021 – 12/15/2021

By December, 2021, assess the current state of Peoria Care's efforts in reaching, selecting, and supporting volunteer mentors and create or revise policies, procedures, and documents to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of the management system of the overnight emergency shelter.

Member Activities (2,500 characters with spaces):

1. Research the history of volunteer programs at Peoria Cares.
 - a. Review and become familiar with internal policies, procedures, and documents related to the mentor recruitment and matching system by September 20, 2021. Identify the current program's strengths and challenges.
 - b. In collaboration with Peoria Cares leadership, develop a written plan for improvement by October 20, 2021.
2. Refine or develop systems for screening and scheduling volunteers.
 - a. Develop or revise documents related to internal policies and procedures regarding volunteer recruitment and scheduling by November 20, 2021.

- b. If needed, participate in online training on how to build a database in Excel by November 20, 2021.
- c. Create Peoria Cares Excel database to track mentor screening and scheduling by December 20, 2021.

Objective of the Assignment (1,000 characters with spaces):

01/01/2022 – 08/15/2022

By 8/15/2022, set up outreach systems and build partnerships with at least 10 community organizations—and then develop targeted marketing materials—to increase public awareness of the volunteer program.

Member Activities (2,500 characters with spaces):

1. Plan for outreach and recruitment
 - a. Identify the skills, abilities, and experiences sought in volunteers by January 30, 2022
 - b. Write volunteer task descriptions that include qualifications, activities, benefits, time commitment, and other expectations by February 28, 2022.
 - c. Attend 10 community events, as well as identify and develop partnerships with 10 community organizations whose members are possible volunteers or who can otherwise support the organization, by March 30, 2022. Continue to update the internal database to track volunteer screening and scheduling.
2. Market the program to targeted audiences.
 - a. Develop community organization-specific marketing emails by May 15, 2022.
 - b. Design marketing materials to post on five social media sites by May 31, 2022.
 - c. Create Peoria Cares marketing binder / electronic folder with updated marketing materials by June 30, 2022.