VIRGINIA HOUSING
ALLIANCE

Host Site Application Instructions
VHA AmeriCorps VISTA Project
2023/2024 Service Term

Application Deadline: Friday, December 2, 2022

Email completed application to Hmoore@vahousingalliance.org
no later than midnight on 12/2/2022

Contact Information:
Hannah Moore, VHA VISTA Program Manager
Hmoore@vahousingalliance.org | 910.258.2420

Note: Adapted from the City of Memphis' Project Proposal/Application Instructions and Campus Compact Host Site Request for Proposal

Introduction to the VHA AmeriCorps VISTA Project

Nine years ago, VHA launched its AmeriCorps VISTA Project (under the Virginia Coalition to End Homelessness) designed to provide Continuums of Care (CoCs), homeless service providers, and affordable housing agencies with a package of on-going technical assistance and a well-trained VISTA Member to implement community capacity building initiatives.

VHA is excited to continue to provide this resource package to affordable housing and services organizations. The project will provide VHA Members in Virginia a VISTA Member who will receive training and ongoing support from VHA and partners to assist your local community and agency in meeting our shared goals:

❖ Engaging current and new stakeholders in the expansion of affordable housing and homeless response systems;
❖ Developing resources to increase development capacity and organizational sustainability;
❖ Using data to articulate need and progress and make data-driven decisions (and therefore be more competitive in garnering resources);
❖ Supporting transitions to best practice models, and;
❖ Engaging in multi-disciplinary initiatives that integrate affordable housing.

This packet provides information on the AmeriCorps VISTA program, including VHA's project requirements, Host Site eligibility standards, and the general activities in which a VHA AmeriCorps VISTA Member would be engaged in your community. Also outlined in this packet is the timeline and process for applying for this opportunity.

We look forward to continuing working with you to expand affordable housing opportunities in Virginia. Thank you, as always, for your commitment and dedication to this important work.

Sincerely,

Brian Koziol, Executive Director

Section A: AmeriCorps VISTA Overview

What is AmeriCorps VISTA?
Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) was established in 1965 as a national service program designed specifically to fight poverty in America. In 1993, VISTA was incorporated into the AmeriCorps network of programs under the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). AmeriCorps VISTA members make a year-long, full-time commitment to serve on a specific project at a nonprofit organization or public agency. They focus their efforts to build the organizational, administrative, and financial capacity of organizations that fight illiteracy, improve health services, foster economic development, and otherwise assist low-income communities. All Host Site projects are developed in accordance with AmeriCorps VISTA's 4 core principles:
1. Anti-Poverty
2. Community Empowerment
3. Sustainable Solutions
4. Capacity Building

AmeriCorps VISTA members
AmeriCorps VISTA members serve full-time for 40 hours a week for an entire year at a specific Host Site organization. VISTA members pursue their assignments for a variety of reasons, ranging from wanting to make a difference in their community to advancing their career through invaluable professional development. Their experience levels, backgrounds, ages, races, and cultures all vary and each VISTA member brings their unique expertise and fresh perspectives to organizations to help expand their capacity. More often than not, the VHA VISTA members have been recent graduates or folks looking for a career change. The AmeriCorps VISTA program states that members must:

- ❖ Be 18 years or older (no upper age limit)
- ❖ Pass a national service criminal history check
- ❖ Hold one of the following citizenship statuses: US citizen, US National, Lawful Permanent Resident Aliens and persons residing in a state that have the following legal residency classifications: refugee, asylum or asylee, temporary protected status, or deferred action for childhood arrivals (DACA) status.

VISTA members receive a bi-weekly living allowance that varies by county (ex. City of Richmond - $675.08 or Arlington County - $925.12), which is 105% of the Federal Poverty Level. In addition to the living allowance, they also receive healthcare benefits, loan forbearance, 80 hours of vacation/sick leave, childcare assistance (if eligible), non-competitive eligibility status for a federal government job post-service term, and relocation allowances. VISTA members are expected to live in the communities in which they serve; however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, VISTA members can serve remotely for the time being. Upon successful completion of their year of service, they can choose to receive either a cash stipend of $1,800 or an Education Award of $6,495. VISTA members also receive ongoing training, professional development opportunities, and a waived fee to attend all 3 of VHA's conferences during their service term.

Recruitment and VISTA Member Qualifications
VISTA members will be recruited in a collaborative fashion. Host sites are responsible for recruiting locally for VISTA applicants through their own networks. VHA will recruit through statewide networks, job sites, college fairs, etc. and will also work with CNCS to post the official AmeriCorps position listing for nationwide recruitment. All VISTA applicants must fill out an official online AmeriCorps application to be considered for the

position. VISTA members are most often recruited from two distinct populations: recent college graduates and baby boomers/career changers.

VISTA applicants submit their application to a Host Site's specific project via the AmeriCorps portal. The VHA VISTA Program manager will then conduct a pre-screening interview to see if the applicant is fit for the position and provide their recommendation. The VHA PM will then send the pre-screen notes, the applicant's application, their resume, and two references to the Host Site, who is then responsible for setting up a 2nd interview if they are interested in moving forward with the applicant. This process helps guarantee competitive and qualified applicants for the program to fill the VHA VISTA positions. Post VISTA placement, CNCS will provide an initial orientation focused on poverty and capacity building. VHA staff will then provide a 3 day training focused on affordable housing/homelessness at the federal and state level, the VISTA benefits, VADs, and cohort cohesion. The Host Site will orient the VISTA to their organization and local community during the VISTA's first few weeks of service. VHA VISTA members are incredibly qualified and we take the necessary steps to make sure our members are equipped with the knowledge and tools to have a successful VISTA term. To learn more about the impact of the VHA VISTAs, check out the VHA's AmeriCorps VISTA Project document, page 10.

What can VISTA members do?
AmeriCorps VISTA members do not participate in direct service. Due to that rule, VISTA members serve on indirect service projects to help create systems or infrastructure that expands the capacity of organizations to more effectively and efficiently serve their community. In determining whether VISTA is the right match for a given organization's needs, think about the kinds of activities members will be expected to perform. The role of the VISTA member is primarily to build the capacity and sustainability of the project and community, with a focus on reducing and alleviating poverty.

VISTA members can (the following is not a comprehensive list of activities):
- Write grant applications for funding and other resources
- Convene stakeholders to advance local affordable housing policy conversations
- Assist in the creation and approval process for equitable policy, procedure, and agreement documentation related to governance or committees
- Revise/develop Housing First training for board member orientation and other stakeholders that highlights how the agency fits within the regional homeless services system
- Document and assess the influence of COVID-19 on disproportionately impacted communities, especially communities of color, and create planning structures and partnerships that help identify strategies to eliminate such disparities
- Cultivate key partnerships in the community advance programmatic outreach
- Recruit, screen, train, and coordinate volunteers

VISTA members cannot:
- Displace a current employee or serve in a regular staff position (VISTA Members cannot fill staff positions)
- Focus on direct service activities
- Supervisor employees of an organization
- Be involved with political advocacy, religious instruction, voter registration, fundraising for Host Site match or operating expenses, union organizing, or clerical activities as part of their duties
- Have full-time employment outside of VISTA responsibilities or be a full-time student

Reporting and Performance Measures
Each month, VISTA members complete a VHA developed report that covers what activities have been accomplished, any challenges VISTAs faced, training needs, and to track the VISTA members' progress. The Monthly Reports serve as a way to collect CNCS and grant requirement performance measures for the VISTA program. A six-month progress report and end-of-year sustainability report must be completed by each VISTA member to assist with VHA's reporting to CNCS. Site supervisors also complete a brief check-in sent out every

3 months. VHA completes all other VISTA program reporting to CNCS. VHA works with sites to track outputs and outcomes of the VISTA project.

Section B: Virginia Housing Alliance VISTA Project

Virginia Housing Alliance VISTA Program Overview
The Virginia Housing Alliance (VHA), state and national partners, and our service provider partners across Virginia are working to reduce homelessness and expand affordable housing opportunities through education, advocacy, training, and capacity building. The VHA VISTA project provides the human capital necessary to deliver on the ground technical support to agencies developing, providing, or otherwise supporting homeless response systems and expanding affordable housing. VISTA Members will be placed in 18 Host Sites across the state, providing key leadership, guidance, and direction to help VHA's local partners achieve greater impact for their clients.

Virginia Housing Alliance Program Priorities 2023/2024

1. **Economic Opportunity:** Virginia Housing Alliance will support capacity building projects that leverage an AmeriCorps member to develop viable communities by promoting integrated approaches that provide decent housing, a suitable living environment, and expand economic opportunities for low and moderate-income persons. Host Site's VISTA project should focus on one or more of the following:
   a. Expanding Affordable Housing
   b. Ending Homelessness
   c. Eviction Prevention

2. **Priority Populations:**
   a. Rural Communities
   b. Indian Country (term used by CNCS)
   c. Areas of Concentrated Poverty - Concentrated poverty is defined as census tracts or counties with poverty rates at or above 20%. These can be rural or urban areas, and the projects can be located in or serve the high poverty areas.

Host Site projects should fall in alignment with CNCS core principles mentioned earlier:

❖ **Anti-poverty focused:** Projects should focus on serving areas of concentrated poverty (urban and/or rural). The statutory purpose of AmeriCorps VISTA is to strengthen and support efforts to eliminate and alleviate poverty and to address poverty-related problems in the United States.
❖ **Capacity Building:** Creating systems that remain long after their term of service ends. VISTA projects that expand the scale, impact, and resource-leveraging ability of specific anti-poverty programs through community partnerships, securing long-term resources, and addressing specific local needs.
❖ **Sustainable Solutions:** Projects must be developed with a goal to phase out the need for VISTAs and have the project continue without VISTA resources.
❖ **Community Empowerment:** The project must be responsive and relevant to the lives of community residents and must tap into inherent community assets, strengths, and resources.

<u>VHA Responsibilities</u>
  A. Grant Administration
      ○ Write and submit the Federal grant application, negotiate the award, and partner with the State AmeriCorps Office
      ○ Conduct application assistance, review proposals, make grant decisions, provide feedback to host site applicants
      ○ Create and deliver MOUs for Host Sites and CNCS
      ○ Conduct site visits (virtual or in-person) in support of program implementation
      ○ Process VISTA members biweekly living allowance and expense reimbursements
      ○ Track AmeriCorps members attendance and use of leave time
      ○ Complete semi-annual and annual reports to AmeriCorps to convey overall Virginia Housing Alliance program metrics and achievements as well as financial reports
  B. Member/Site Supervisor Training and Support
      ○ Provide Site Supervisor and VISTA member training throughout the year
      ○ Provide Professional Development training throughout the year for VISTA members
      ○ Conduct VISTA monthly conference calls to discuss project goals, challenges, and successes
      ○ Develop networking opportunities for VISTA members
      ○ Handle all VISTA benefit questions (healthcare, pay, Education award, etc.)
      ○ Provide support to AmeriCorps members by phone, email, video conference, and on-site as needed
  C. Recruitment
      ○ Assistance with recruitment and on-boarding of new VISTA members
      ○ Provide national outreach for VISTA applicants through the AmeriCorps portal
      ○ Pre-Screening applicants and providing recommendations to Site Supervisors
      ○ Create Service Opportunity Listings for Host Sites and their recruitment
      ○ Review candidate applications, check references, write sponsor evaluations of candidates, and submit candidates to AmeriCorps for approval
  D. Project Development
      ○ Collaborate with Site Supervisor to create VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)
      ○ Develop tangible goals and activities for VISTA members with Host site
      ○ Track VAD Progress through Monthly Reports

Section C: Host Site Responsibilities

What organizations are eligible to host a VHA VISTA?
An agency is eligible if it is the lead entity representing a Continuum of Care (CoC) in the Commonwealth of Virginia, local planning group (LPG) that participates in the Balance of State (BOS) Continuum of Care, or a homeless services agency with a history of collaboration with its CoC/LPG. Other eligible agencies include community action agencies, nonprofit housing developers, Faith based or nonprofit organizations with a 501(c) designation, community development financial institutions, planning district commissions, affordable housing providers, other regional service providers, or a government agency: city, county, regional, state, tribal or federal.

Is a VISTA member right for your organization?
The following is a list of questions to think about before applying for an AmeriCorps VISTA member:
  ❖ Is there a poverty related project your organization would like to start or expand? Is my project focused on affordable housing, homelessness, or eviction prevention?
  ❖ Does your organization have the infrastructure in place to support a VISTA member? (Think staff time for supervision, a work space with computer and phone access etc.)
  ❖ Has your organization utilized VISTA or AmeriCorps resources in the past? If so, how will this be different?
  ❖ Is anyone at the organization (staff or volunteer) currently involved in a project like the one you'd like the VISTA member to work on? Please note that VISTA members cannot replace staff positions.
  ❖ How will your organization sustain the project after the VISTA member completes their year of service?

- ❖ What is your organization's financial plan to pay the $8,000 Host Site Fee required to participate in the VHA VISTA Program?

Host Site Responsibilities
Host Sites must...

Delegate a supervisor for their VHA VISTA member to provide guidance, management, and coaching support

Provide a dedicated work space, computer, and any other equipment necessary to complete required tasks

Provide mileage reimbursement for any travel required by the site (not for VHA events)

Provide an environment that conforms to all workplace-related health and safety laws

Have a poverty-focused project for the duration of 365 days that is composed of solely capacity building activities and not direct service

Ensure that Site Supervisors attend 2 Supervisor Trainings throughout the year

Ensure that Site Supervisors provide feedback every 3 months on project success and VISTA accomplishments through VHA Reporting systems

Implement the On Site Orientation Training (OSOT) form prior to the VISTA members arrival to help acclimate their new member to their organization and project

Work alongside VHA to recruit members for the project position

Outline a plan to provide VHA with the Host Site Fee and other expenses (travel, computers, etc.) of hosting a VISTA (see below)

Become a member of the Virginia Housing Alliance

Host Site Financial Commitment
The Virginia Housing Alliance VISTA program requires a $8,000 Host Site fee from each Host Site for their VISTA member. The Host Site fee is used to pay for VISTA Cost Share living allowance invoices incurred, administrative costs, and recruitment costs. The VHA VISTA project is a cost-share partnership, in which all parties contribute to the success and outcomes of the VISTA program at their Host Site. Investment by the Host Site and the community is fundamental, as the VISTA resources are intended to be short-term and for a max 3 year cycle.

The fee can be paid upfront at the beginning of the VISTA service in August of 2023 or invoiced monthly throughout the VISTA term (August 2023 - August 2024). The Host Site does not need to have the money at the start of the application process to apply. They do, however, have to detail a plan in which they will secure that funding prior to the start of their VISTA member in August of 2023 within their Host Site Application. **The fee does include a $500 non-refundable recruitment deposit.** If your VISTA member terminates their service early, you will receive a prorated refund based on how many months are left in their service excluding the recruitment deposit. If the Host Site hires their VISTA member in any capacity prior to the end of their service, the site will not receive a prorated fee.

VHA is working on securing possible funding to provide Host Site Scholarships for organizations whose operating budgets are less than 1 million to help cover the Host Site fee. VHA should know soon if this is a possibility for potential applicants for the 2023/24 year; however, at this point, applicants who meet this criteria should still provide a plan on securing their own funding outside of the scholarships to cover that $8,000 Host Site fee.

Additional Costs to Consider for Host Sites
Each project has different budgetary needs. Some projects will have more travel required where another will need more funding for training. Planning a budget before applying to be a VISTA Host Site can eliminate potential problems in the future. The following are potential additional costs:

- ❖ Becoming a Virginia Housing Alliance member (if organization isn't already a member)
- ❖ Recruitment costs (advertising, printing, interview time, etc.)
- ❖ VISTA on-site supervisor time

- ❖ Project related training for VISTA
- ❖ Mileage reimbursement for project related travel (not for VHA events - VHA covers all travel costs associated with our mandatory training)
- ❖ Office supplies and equipment (computer, paper, software, desk, etc.)
- ❖ Postage, telephone and long distance
- ❖ Additional project related expenses (web-hosting, publishing materials, professional dues, etc.)
- ❖ Optional: Host Sites cannot give VISTA members money directly; however, Host Sites are able to provide their VISTA member with non-cash support to help supplement their low living allowance rates. These items include:
  - ○ Housing at managed property
  - ○ Rental stipend to be given directly to landlord or agency
  - ○ Utility Bill to be paid directly to Utility Company
  - ○ Gift cards for food & grocery
  - ○ Public Transportation pass/Gas gift cards

Extension and Priority Policy

VHA has implemented an extension and priority policy to our returning Host Sites. If you are selected as a VHA Host Site, you will receive priority as a year 2 or 3 VHA VISTA Host Site and have the option to extend for a total of a 3-year consecutive project period. You will not have to submit a full application for committee review each year; however, you will have to showcase your project's sustainability and how a new VISTA will build upon the successes of the last. This extension is subject to change if there are any conduct or programmatic violations at the Host Site. This new rule helps to improve the sustainability, impact, and overall success of a VISTA project at an organization and within their community. We are asking that all returning Host Sites who are interested in extending their project into Year 2 or Year 3 for the 2023/24 year, fill out a full application to have on record; however, they are able to take full advantage of this new extension and priority policy immediately. Next year, returning Host Sites will have a shorter, more direct application. Year 3 Host Sites will have to develop a new VAD and project and re-enter the full committee reviewal process to restart the cycle with a Year 1 project.

Section D: Application Instructions

Applications must be typed and be in the application format provided by VHA, which can be saved either as PDF or DOC. *Please do not use any other formats to submit your application. Please fill out the boxes in the application accordingly.*

Due Date: Friday, December 2 by midnight
How to submit: Email the application to VHA VISTA Program Manager at Hmoore@vahousingalliance.org

Host Site Selection Process

VISTA Host Site selection will be determined through a competitive application process. A committee of community representatives in the housing, homelessness, and eviction prevention field outside of VHA will review, score, and rank the applications received. The chosen applicants will be notified of the committee's decision in late December/early January. Committee members will be looking for Host Sites to have a clear vision of their VISTA project that is connected to their community's needs, concrete activities for the VAD, strong supervision and professional development outlines, and plans for project sustainability.

Section 1A and 1B: Organization and Applicant Information

Section 1A: Host Sites provide their basic information regarding their organization.
- If your organization has multiple offices, please use the address in which the VISTA member will work out of
- If your organization serves the entire state of Virginia, please write VA

Section 1B: Applicant will provide basic contact information for the organization and point of contact.
- If the applicant is different from the intended Site Supervisor, please make sure to correctly fill in this section in the appropriate boxes

Section 2: Narratives

Organization:
- Please provide a summary of your organization's history, your mission (if you do not have a formal mission statement, how would you describe the main priority/purpose statement at your site?), the community/population in which your organization serves, and goals.
- Add in any relevant information that will help the committee understand your impact.

Community Need:
- Describe the unmet poverty-related community need(s) that the VISTA project will work to address, citing any statistical data and reliable sources.
- This should relate to your VISTA project which will be outlined in the next narrative section.

VISTA Project Summary:
- This section is where you will present your VISTA project and summarize what activities the VISTA member will complete during their 12 month term.
- Include information on how your VISTA project will address the community needs highlighted in the Community Need section.
- What are your organization's capacity building outcomes desired from this project?
- How will this project make your organization more efficient and effective?

Sustainability:
- State the intended timeline of your VISTA project. Do you foresee this being a 1, 2, or 3 year VISTA project?
- Address how you will ensure the proposed project and outcomes continue without VISTA resources.
- What community stakeholders, partners, members, or other affiliates are involved?

Recruitment:
- The Host Site and VHA split the responsibility of recruiting applicants for the VISTA project. Describe how your Host Site will promote your project listing throughout your network.

Member Support:
- Host Sites are responsible for the daily supervision of their VISTA member. Describe who in the organization will be the Site Supervisor and what types of check-ins or orientations will be implemented for the VISTA member.
- How will you help your member adjust to your organization?

- What office resources will be provided to the VISTA?
- Does your organization/Site Supervisor have any history with AmeriCorps VISTA members in the past?

Professional Development:
- Professional development is a high priority for the VHA VISTA program. How will you ensure that your VISTA member will receive these opportunities at your site?
- Include connecting them with any partners, training, etc.

Section 3: Host Site Fees

The VHA VISTA project requires a Host Site fee of $8,000 for all Host Sites. We are aware that the timeline for submission of the Host Site Application is tight. We do not expect the Host Sites to have the funds at the time of application submission; however, we do ask that applicants detail the plan that they have for securing that funding before it is due. Examples include (but are not limited to): Grant/Funding submissions, adjusting budget allocations, fundraising through board members, etc.. Keep in mind, submitting an application does not commit you to the VHA VISTA project or the fee/deposit.

Section 4: VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)

The VISTA Assignment Description or VAD details the activities VISTA members perform during their year of service. A strong VAD is the foundation on which the VISTA member experience is built. The VAD:
- ❖ Acts as a position description that is to be used in the recruitment of VISTA members
- ❖ Establishes a work plan for your VISTA member to help them achieve their project goals
- ❖ Translates the project goals that you've detailed in your application into realistic set of activities
- ❖ Serves as a tool for your VISTA member to use throughout their service term to check progress
- ❖ Becomes a reference point if there are any concerns regarding VISTAs member's responsibilities
- ❖ Can be changed and updated throughout the year to reflect organization's focus with approval by VHA and CNCS

There is an example VAD at the end of this document for reference purposes

VISTA Title
The title of your VISTA should summarize your project's focus areas. This can be changed prior to recruitment opening. Examples include: Data Analyst VISTA, Communications Strategy VISTA, Housing Specialist VISTA.

Objectives
VHA chooses the 4 objectives of the VAD and applicants should put their activities underneath the corresponding VAD. This helps create programmatic cohesion since our program has a wide range of projects and is focused in 3 different areas: Housing, homelessness, and eviction prevention.

Activities
In this section you will need to identify the specific activities the VISTA will carry out to achieve the objectives. Activities that include the desired outcome or deliverables are most informative and effective. They should answer the questions: *How will the VISTA member reach the intended goal of your project? What are the 'action items' they will create, implement, evaluate, etc., during their service term? What are some of the outcomes that you want your VISTA member to accomplish and how will they do that?* Avoid vague statements such as the VISTA "will assist with…" Activity statements should be specific enough that someone unfamiliar with the project can understand the expectations of the VISTA. Keep in mind that VISTA projects focus on capacity building efforts and there should be no direct service activities listed on the VAD.

The activities shouldn't just be the outcome - Ex. Build partnerships - but should include a way for your VISTA to accomplish it - Ex Build partnerships by establishing a Housing Committee of local Richmond

Housing Authorities to share best practices. There is no limit on activities. Please try to have at least 2 per section; however, that may vary due to the focus of your project.

Examples of capacity building activities performed by VISTAs:
❖ Develop a volunteer policy and procedure handbook to be used in training
❖ Create an outreach campaign that increases community awareness of VHA's educational Housing Forums
❖ Design press kits for new affordable housing sites to be sent to local news outlets
❖ Clean and update the resident services database to ensure correct contact information
❖ For more examples, look at the attached example VAD at the end of this document

VHA VISTA Program Timeline

December 2, 2022	❖ Host Site Applications are Due
Late December	❖ Host Sites are notified of the Host Site Application Committee's decision
January 2023	❖ Execution of Memorandum of Understanding between VHA and Host Site ❖ VISTA Assignment Description (VAD) co-created between VHA and Host Site ❖ Create Opportunity Listing for VISTA member recruitment
February 2023	❖ VISTA opportunity listings are completed ❖ VISTA Assignment Descriptions (VADs) are completed
March 2023	❖ VISTA supervisor Zoom training (overview of the VISTA program and supervisor responsibilities)
April 2023	❖ VISTA recruitment cycle opens in CNCS portal
April - July 2023	❖ Ongoing recruitment from VHA and Host Sites for VISTA interviews ❖ VISTA Members interviewed, selected, and approved ❖ On Site Orientation Form Due
August 2023	❖ VISTA arrives at the host site ❖ Host Sites pay the $8,000 fee ❖ Virtual Member Orientation by CNCS ❖ In-person* VHA training (3 days) ❖ On-Site Orientation/Training (OSOT) [First few weeks]
October-November 2023	❖ Site visits (VISTA Member, site supervisor and project manager) [TBD] ❖ OSOT completed

For any questions regarding these instructions or the application itself, please email the VHA VISTA Program Manager, Hannah Moore, at hmoore@vahousingalliance.org or by cell at 910.258.2420.

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VISTA Assignment Description (VAD) EXAMPLE

Title of VISTA: Virginia Housing Alliance Fundraising and Communications VISTA
Sponsoring Organization: Virginia Housing Alliance **Project Name:** Virginia Coalition to End Homelessness **Project Number:** 13VSSVA005 **Project Period:** 2023/2024
Site Name (if applicable): Virginia Housing Alliance

Focus Area(s)
  Primary: Economic Opportunity
  Secondary:

Note: *If your VAD is not accepted, the State Office will note the reason(s) why here.*

VISTA Assignment Objectives and Member Activities

Goal of the Project: Virginia Housing Alliance's (VHA) mission is to expand affordable housing opportunities and end homelessness in Virginia through advocacy, education, and capacity building. The VISTA member will work to identify new avenues of funding to help expand VHA's educational component of providing housing training to other public sectors as well as cultivate new community partnerships to help lead this state-wide training. The VISTA member will also develop a digital outreach strategy that increases awareness about the HoUSEed campaign, generates donors for the 3 main VHA conferences, and expands VHA's reach to increase membership.

Objective 1 of the Assignment
Develop or identify resources to increase capacity and enhance organizational sustainability, efficiency, and effectiveness.

Member Activities:
1. Identify new grant opportunities that will increase funding for the VHA sponsored housing training forums and webinars.
   a. Draft letters of inquiry, proposals, and reports.
   b. Edit, proofread, and assist in writing non-grant narratives, reports, and success stories, as needed.
2. Prepare briefing materials, funder updates, and other programmatic updates to support cultivation and stewardship efforts.
3. Create marketing materials for the 3 VHA Conferences with a target of increasing and diversifying donors and stakeholders.
4. Develop a survey for members that identifies training needs to ensure that VHA's educational component is comprehensive.
   a. Present findings to VHA's board committee.
   b. Identify community stakeholders to help fill the service gaps and provide training based on the feedback from surveys.

Objective 2 of the Assignment
Enhance community and partner engagement to expand affordable housing and/or homelessness services efforts.

Member Activities:
1. Establish a committee of folks with lived experience to share their stories on the impact of affordable housing.
    a. Develop videos, blogs, and photo campaigns to share these stories to increase community awareness on the importance of affordable housing.
    b. Create social media campaigns with the goal of increasing membership.
2. Develop an outreach strategy that increases awareness about VHA's HoUSed campaign.
    a. Connect with partners to share social media content across all platforms.

Objective 3 of the Assignment
Improve the quality of data collection and use in decision-making.

Member Activities:

1. Create and implement a database training program for VHA's grant writing team to maximize and centralize award information and funder deliverables.
2. Centralize data derived from membership feedback forms to be more accessible for developing educational curriculums for the upcoming year.
3. Collect and compile data on affordable housing in Virginia.
    a. Draft reports and presentations to help inform decision making for VHA's yearly advocacy agenda.
4. Develop forum feedback forms to gauge the impact of the housing training.

Objective 4 of the Assignment
Promote best practices in affordable housing development and/or homelessness services.

Member Activities:
1. Establish a recurring partnership call with affordable housing agencies in VA to share innovative strategies for expanding affordable housing in the Commonwealth.
    a. Create avenues for partners to share funding opportunities, best practices, and success stories.
2. Identify opportunities to collaborate with and provide training to other social service organizations on the issue of affordable housing.