VIRGINIA HOUSING
ALLIANCE

Host Site Application Instructions

VHA AmeriCorps VISTA Project

VISTA Service Term: August 2027 – August 2028

Application Deadline: December 8, 2026

Email your completed application to hmoore@vahousingalliance.org by 11:59 p.m. on December 8, 2026.

Questions? Contact:
Hannah Moore, VHA VISTA Program Manager
hmoore@vahousingalliance.org | 910.258.2420

AmeriCorps

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

Welcome from the Executive Director

Dear Prospective Host Site,

For more than a decade, the Virginia Housing Alliance (VHA) has run an AmeriCorps VISTA Project that pairs Continuums of Care (CoCs), homeless service providers, and affordable housing organizations with a well-trained, full-time VISTA Volunteer, backed by ongoing training and technical assistance from VHA. Together, our Host Sites and VISTA Volunteers work toward shared goals:

- Engaging current and new stakeholders in expanding affordable housing and homeless response systems
- Developing resources that increase development capacity and organizational sustainability
- Using data to articulate need and progress, make data-driven decisions, and compete for resources
- Supporting transitions to best-practice models
- Engaging in multidisciplinary initiatives that integrate affordable housing

We are excited to continue offering this resource to organizations across Virginia. Thank you for your commitment and dedication to expanding affordable housing opportunities and ending homelessness in the Commonwealth. We look forward to learning about your project.

Sincerely,

Brian Koziol, Executive Director

How to Use This Document

These instructions are written for organizations that are new to the VHA VISTA Program. They explain what AmeriCorps VISTA is, what hosting a VISTA Volunteer involves, and how to complete each part of the application. Use them alongside two companion documents:

- **The VHA Host Site Application:** the form you will complete and submit.
- **The VHA VISTA Program and Host Site Overview:** a summary of VISTA impact, benefits, and past projects at VHA Host Sites.

The instructions are organized in the order most applicants need them:

Part 1	**About AmeriCorps VISTA:** what VISTA Volunteers are, and what they can and cannot do
Part 2	**The VHA VISTA Project:** VHA's program priorities and the support VHA provides
Part 3	**Hosting a VISTA Volunteer:** eligibility, Host Site responsibilities, and the Site Support Payment
Part 4	**Completing the Application:** section-by-section guidance that follows the application
Appendix	**Example VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)**

At a Glance

Application deadline	December 8, 2026, by 11:59 p.m.
How to submit	Email the completed VHA Host Site Application (Word or PDF) to hmoore@vahousingalliance.org
Selection decisions	January 2027
VISTA service term	August 2027 – August 2028 (12 months, full-time)
Site Support Payment (SSP)	$6,500 per Host Site, due August 2027 (may be invoiced monthly)
Draft review and questions	Hannah Moore, VHA VISTA Program Manager: hmoore@vahousingalliance.org | 910.258.2420

Key Dates

When	What happens
December 8, 2026	Host Site Applications due
December 2026	Host Site Review Committee scores and ranks applications
January 2027	Applicants are notified of the committee's decision
January – February 2027	• Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) sent to selected Host Sites • VHA and each Host Site finalize the VISTA Assignment Description (VAD) • VISTA Service Opportunity Listings created for recruitment
March 2027	Site Supervisor virtual training (overview of the VISTA program and supervisor responsibilities)
April – August 2027	• VISTA Volunteer recruitment: listings open in the AmeriCorps portal • VHA pre-screens candidates; Host Sites interview and select • On-Site Orientation and Training (OSOT) plan due before the VISTA's start date
August 2027	• VISTA Volunteers begin service • SSP due (or first monthly invoice) • AmeriCorps virtual orientation and VHA VISTA Orientation • Host Site OSOT begins (first few weeks of service)
October – November 2027	Site visits with the VISTA Volunteer, Site Supervisor, and VHA Program Manager; OSOT completed
August 2028	VISTA service term ends

Part 1: About AmeriCorps VISTA

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 became part of the AmeriCorps network of programs, administered by the federal agency AmeriCorps (formerly the Corporation for National and Community Service, or CNCS).

AmeriCorps VISTA Volunteers make a year-long, full-time commitment to serve on a specific project at a nonprofit organization or public agency. Rather than providing services directly, they build the organizational, administrative, and financial capacity of organizations working to reduce poverty in low-income communities.

The Four VISTA Core Principles

Every VISTA project, including the one you propose, must be built on AmeriCorps VISTA's four core principles:

Anti-Poverty	The project works to alleviate poverty and poverty-related problems, ideally in areas of concentrated poverty (urban or rural). This is the statutory purpose of AmeriCorps VISTA.
Capacity Building	The project creates systems that remain long after the VISTA's term ends, expanding the scale, impact, and resource-leveraging ability of anti-poverty programs through partnerships, long-term resources, and attention to local needs.
Sustainable Solutions	The project is designed to phase out the need for a VISTA so that the work continues without VISTA resources.
Community Empowerment	The project is responsive and relevant to the lives of community residents and builds on the community's own assets, strengths, and resources.

Who Are VISTA Volunteers?

VISTA Volunteers serve full-time (35–40 hours per week) for one year at a single Host Site. They choose VISTA for many reasons, from wanting to make a difference in their community to building experience for a career in housing. VHA VISTA Volunteers are most often recent college or graduate school graduates, career changers, and retirees who want to put their professional skills to work. Each brings a unique background and a fresh perspective to the organization.

Eligibility

AmeriCorps requires that VISTA Volunteers:

- Be at least 18 years old (there is no upper age limit)

- Pass a National Service Criminal History Check, which includes the National Sex Offender Public Registry
- Be a U.S. citizen, U.S. national, or lawful permanent resident, or reside in a state with one of these legal residency classifications: refugee, asylee, temporary protected status, or Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)

Benefits

AmeriCorps provides each VISTA Volunteer with:

- A biweekly living allowance set at 105% of the federal poverty level, which varies by county (for example, $983 in the City of Richmond and $1,270 in Arlington County)
- Healthcare benefits and childcare assistance (if eligible)
- Student loan forbearance
- 80 hours of sick leave and 80 hours of vacation leave
- A relocation allowance (if eligible)
- After completing the term, a choice of a $7,395 Segal Education Award or an $1,800 cash stipend
- Non-Competitive Eligibility (NCE) for federal employment after service

VISTA Volunteers are expected to live in the community where they serve. They may serve on a hybrid schedule but cannot serve fully remotely except in approved circumstances, and they follow their Host Site's schedule, including office closures and holidays. VHA adds training and professional development of its own, described in Part 2.

What VISTA Volunteers Can and Cannot Do

AmeriCorps VISTA is a capacity-building program, not a direct service program. VISTA Volunteers build the systems, resources, and partnerships that help your organization serve more people more effectively. They do not provide services to clients themselves. As you consider whether VISTA is a good fit, think carefully about the activities your VISTA Volunteer would perform.

VISTA Volunteers CAN (examples)	VISTA Volunteers CANNOT
• Research and write grant applications • Convene stakeholders to advance local affordable housing policy conversations • Develop policies, procedures, and governance or committee documents • Design trainings and curricula, such as a board orientation that shows how your agency fits in the regional homeless services system • Build databases and information systems to track residents, program impact, volunteers, and more • Conduct research, data analysis, community assessments, and evaluations • Plan communications campaigns and events • Cultivate community partnerships that expand program outreach • Recruit, screen, train, and coordinate volunteers	• Provide direct service to clients, including case management • Displace a current employee or fill a regular staff position • Supervise staff or interns • Perform clerical, administrative, or “busy work” tasks • Engage in political advocacy, protests, petitions, boycotts, or voter registration • Provide religious instruction • Engage in union organizing • Fundraise for Host Site match or operating expenses • Hold full-time outside employment or be a full-time student. Part-time outside employment requires Site Supervisor approval and may not conflict with service hours.

Reporting

VISTA Volunteers submit a monthly report to VHA covering their accomplishments, challenges, and training needs. These reports track progress on the VAD and collect the performance measures VHA reports to AmeriCorps. Each VISTA Volunteer also completes a six-month progress report and, at the end of service, a Sustainability Binder: a summary of the project written so that staff, interns, or a future VISTA can continue the work.

Site Supervisors complete a brief check-in every three months. VHA handles all other reporting to AmeriCorps and works with each Host Site to track the outputs and outcomes of its project.

Part 2: The VHA VISTA Project

Program Overview

VHA, together with state and national partners and service providers across Virginia, works to reduce homelessness and expand affordable housing opportunities through education, advocacy, training, and capacity building. The VHA VISTA Project supplies the human capital needed to deliver on-the-ground technical support to agencies that develop, provide, or otherwise support homeless response systems and affordable housing. VISTA Volunteers will be placed at 18 Host Sites across the Commonwealth, providing leadership, guidance, and direction that help VHA's local partners achieve greater impact for the people they serve.

2027-2028 Program Priorities

VHA's VISTA projects fall under AmeriCorps' **Economic Opportunity** focus area: building viable communities by promoting integrated approaches that provide decent housing, a suitable living environment, and expanded economic opportunity for low- and moderate-income people.

Focus areas: your project should address one or more	Priority populations: projects located in or serving
• Expanding affordable housing • Ending homelessness • Eviction prevention	• Rural communities • Indian Country (AmeriCorps' term for tribal lands and communities) • Areas of concentrated poverty: census tracts or counties with poverty rates at or above 20%, urban or rural

> **Tip**
>
> If your project serves a priority population, say so in your Community Need narrative and support it with data.

What VHA Provides

VHA manages the federal grant and supports both Host Sites and VISTA Volunteers throughout the year.

Grant administration	• Writes and manages the federal AmeriCorps grant in partnership with the State AmeriCorps Office • Provides application assistance and feedback to Host Site applicants • Issues MOUs to selected Host Sites • Processes VISTA living allowances and expense reimbursements, and tracks attendance and leave • Conducts site visits (virtual or in person) • Completes all semiannual, annual, and financial reporting to AmeriCorps
Recruitment	• Creates your Service Opportunity Listing and posts it in the AmeriCorps portal for national recruitment • Promotes openings through statewide networks, social media, job sites, and college fairs • Provides recruitment training for Host Sites • Pre-screens every candidate, checks references, and submits selected candidates to AmeriCorps for approval
Project development	• Works with your Site Supervisor to finalize the VAD with tangible goals and activities • Tracks VAD progress through monthly reports
Site Supervisor support	• Orientation training on supervising VISTA Volunteers and running a successful project • Virtual Site Supervisor gatherings throughout the year • Resources and guidance for challenges that come up at your site • The VISTA's six-month report and end-of-service Sustainability Binder
VISTA Volunteer training and development	• VHA VISTA Orientation on housing and homeless service best practices, AmeriCorps benefits, and reporting • Quarterly trainings, including three in person in Richmond with Virginia Commonwealth University's School of Business • A year-long Coursera subscription and up to $400 in National Grant Foundation classes • Monthly cohort calls for technical assistance and peer support • Free registration to VHA's two statewide conferences • Resume writing and interview preparation for life after VISTA • Answers to all VISTA benefit questions (healthcare, living allowance, Education Award) • Travel costs for all required VHA trainings

Multi-Year Projects: Extension and Priority Policy

VISTA projects are designed to run for up to three consecutive years. Once selected, a Host Site receives priority for a Year 2 and Year 3 VISTA Volunteer and does not need to submit a full application for committee review each year, as long as there are no conduct or programmatic concerns at the site.

After Year 3, a Host Site that wants to continue must develop a new project and VAD and re-enter the full committee review process as a Year 1 project. This structure supports sustainability: by the end of the cycle, your organization should be able to carry the work forward without VISTA resources.

Part 3: Hosting a VISTA Volunteer

Who Is Eligible?

The following organizations in Virginia are eligible to apply:

- The lead entity of a Continuum of Care (CoC)
- A Local Planning Group (LPG) that participates in the Balance of State CoC
- A homeless services agency with a history of collaboration with its CoC or LPG
- Community action agencies, nonprofit housing developers, and affordable housing providers
- Faith-based or nonprofit organizations with a 501(c) designation
- Community development financial institutions (CDFIs) and planning district commissions
- Other regional service providers
- Government agencies: city, county, regional, state, tribal, or federal

Selected Host Sites must also be members of VHA. You do not need to be a member to apply, but you must join (an annual fee) if selected.

Is a VISTA Volunteer Right for Your Organization?

Before you apply, talk through these questions with your leadership team. Your answers will form the foundation of your application.

- Is there a poverty-related project focused on affordable housing, homelessness, or eviction prevention that you want to start or expand but lack the capacity to get off the ground?
- Is the project made up entirely of capacity-building work, enough to fill a full-time, 12-month assignment of 35–40 hours per week, with no direct service?
- Is anyone on staff already doing this work? (VISTA Volunteers cannot replace staff.)
- Does a staff member have time to supervise a VISTA Volunteer (an average of 15 hours per month, and more in the first few weeks)? Do you have workspace and equipment available?
- Have you worked with AmeriCorps VISTA, other national service programs, interns, or volunteers before? If so, how will this project be different?
- How will the work continue after the VISTA Volunteer's service ends?
- How will you cover the $6,500 Site Support Payment?

Host Site Responsibilities

Selected Host Sites agree to the following.

Project and supervision

- Carry out a poverty-focused project made up solely of capacity-building activities for the full 365-day term
- Designate a Site Supervisor who provides daily guidance, coaching, feedback, and mentoring
- Have the Site Supervisor attend two VHA Supervisor Trainings during the year and provide feedback every three months through VHA's reporting system

- Prepare an On-Site Orientation and Training (OSOT) plan before the VISTA Volunteer arrives, so they get to know the project, your staff, your organization, and your community
- Provide professional development opportunities, within reason, such as conferences, webinars, skills training, and presentations

Workspace and expenses

- Provide a dedicated workspace, computer, phone, email, and any other equipment the VISTA needs
- Maintain a workplace that meets all health and safety laws
- Reimburse mileage for travel your site requires (VHA covers travel to VHA events)

Partnership with VHA

- Recruit VISTA applicants through your own networks and interview candidates screened by VHA
- Pay the Site Support Payment
- Become, or remain, a member of VHA

The Site Support Payment (SSP)

The VHA VISTA Project is a cost-share partnership in which AmeriCorps, VHA, and each Host Site invest in the project's success. Each Host Site contributes a **Site Support Payment (SSP) of $6,500** for its VISTA Volunteer. Because VISTA resources are short-term (up to a three-year cycle), the Host Site's investment is essential to building work that lasts.

What the SSP covers	Amount
Recruitment deposit (non-refundable)	$500
Administrative costs	$3,000
Program support	$3,000
Total SSP per Host Site	**$6,500**

When and how to pay

The SSP is due in August 2027, when your VISTA Volunteer begins service. You may pay it in full or be invoiced monthly throughout the term (August 2027 – August 2028).

You do not need the funds in hand to apply. Your application must describe how you will secure the SSP before August 2027 (see Section 3 of the application). Submitting an application does not commit you to the program or to the SSP.

Early end of service

If your VISTA Volunteer ends service early through no fault of the Host Site, you will receive a prorated refund of the SSP, excluding the $500 recruitment deposit:

Months served	Refund
0–3 months	Full prorated amount for the remaining months, minus the recruitment deposit
4–6 months	Half of the prorated amount, minus the recruitment deposit
7 or more months	No refund

> **Hiring your VISTA Volunteer**
>
> VHA encourages Host Sites to hire their VISTA Volunteers, but only **after** the service term ends. If a Host Site hires its VISTA Volunteer in any capacity before the end-of-service date, it will not receive a prorated refund and may be ineligible to host a VISTA for up to a year. The VISTA Volunteer would also lose all end-of-service benefits.

SSP scholarships

VHA has secured funding for four SSP scholarships for Host Sites with annual operating budgets under $1 million. Each scholarship covers the full $6,500 SSP. If your organization qualifies and you would like to be considered, indicate this in Section 3 of the application. Because only four scholarships are available, all applicants, including those who request a scholarship, should include a plan to cover the full $6,500 SSP.

Other Costs to Plan For

Every project's budget is different: some require more travel, others more training. Planning ahead avoids surprises later. Beyond the SSP, consider:

- VHA membership dues (if you are not already a member)
- Local recruitment costs (advertising, printing, and staff time for interviews)
- Site Supervisor time
- Project-specific training for your VISTA Volunteer
- Mileage reimbursement for project-related travel
- Office supplies and equipment (computer, software, desk, phone)
- Other project expenses (web hosting, printed materials, professional dues)

Optional non-cash support. Host Sites cannot give VISTA Volunteers money directly, but may offer non-cash support to supplement the modest living allowance, such as:

- Housing at a managed property or a rental stipend
- Utility bill assistance

- Gift cards for food and groceries
- Public transportation passes or gas cards

How VISTA Volunteers Are Recruited and Onboarded

Recruitment is a shared responsibility between VHA and the Host Site, and it ensures each Host Site has competitive, qualified candidates.

1. **Listing.** VHA posts your Service Opportunity Listing in the AmeriCorps portal and promotes it statewide. You promote it through your own networks.
2. **Application.** Candidates apply to your specific project through the AmeriCorps portal.
3. **Pre-screen.** The VHA VISTA Program Manager interviews each candidate and sends you the pre-screen notes and a recommendation, along with the candidate's application, resume, and two references.
4. **Host Site interview.** You schedule a second interview with any candidate you want to move forward.
5. **Approval.** VHA submits your selected candidate to AmeriCorps for approval and the National Service Criminal History Check. Host Sites may also run their own background checks.
6. **Onboarding.** AmeriCorps provides a virtual orientation on poverty and capacity building, VHA provides the VHA VISTA Orientation, and your organization delivers its OSOT during the VISTA Volunteer's first few weeks.

Part 4: Completing the Application

Before You Begin

Format	Type your responses directly into the VHA Host Site Application form and save it as a Word document or PDF. Applications in any other format will not be accepted. Keep each narrative within its word range.
Deadline	December 8, 2026, by 11:59 p.m.
Submit	Email the application to hmoore@vahousingalliance.org
Draft review	You are encouraged to send a full draft or individual sections to the VHA VISTA Program Manager for feedback before you submit. The Program Manager does **not** serve on the review committee and has no influence on its decisions.

How Applications Are Reviewed

Host Sites are selected through a competitive process. A committee of professionals in housing, homelessness, and eviction prevention from outside VHA reviews, scores, and ranks each application, and applicants are notified of the decision in January 2027.

Reviewers read the application as a whole. The strongest applications tell one connected story:

1. **A clearly defined need,** backed by current data, that the organization is already working to address
2. **A VISTA project and VAD** that respond directly to that need with specific, realistic capacity-building activities
3. **An organization ready to support a VISTA Volunteer,** with supervision, workspace, a recruitment plan, and professional development
4. **A plan for sustaining the work** after the VISTA Volunteer's service ends
5. **A realistic plan for covering the SSP**

Because the VISTA Project Summary and the VAD describe what your VISTA Volunteer will actually do all year, they are the heart of your application. Reviewers read them side by side, so give them the most attention.

Section-by-Section Guidance

Section 1A: Organization Information

- **Address:** If your organization has multiple offices, use the address where the VISTA Volunteer will serve.
- **Geographic area:** List the specific cities, counties, or region you serve. If you serve the entire state, write "Virginia."

- **VHA membership:** Answer Y or N. Non-members are eligible to apply but must join VHA if selected.

Section 1B: Contact Information

The **Organization Contact** is VHA's point of contact during the application process. The **Site Supervisor** is VHA's contact throughout the VISTA year. If they are different people, complete both sets of fields. Choose a Site Supervisor who will have time for regular, hands-on supervision.

Section 2: Narratives

The seven narratives build on one another. Write them in order, and refer back to earlier sections so reviewers can follow the thread from need, to project, to sustainability.

Organization 100–300 words

What to include

- Your organization's history and mission (if you don't have a formal mission statement, describe your main purpose)
- The community and population you serve, and your current goals
- Any information that helps reviewers understand your impact, such as people served, key programs, or partnerships

Community Need 200–600 words

What to include

- The specific, unmet poverty-related need your VISTA project will address, focused on affordable housing, homelessness, or eviction prevention
- Data that supports the need: current, cited statistics on poverty, housing, homelessness, demographics, or the population you serve. Qualitative examples, such as waitlists or partner feedback, can strengthen the picture.
- What your organization is already doing to address the need
- The challenges that keep you from doing more: the capacity gap a VISTA Volunteer would fill
- Whether your project serves a priority population (rural communities, Indian Country, or areas of concentrated poverty)

Tip: Use the most recent data available and name your sources. By the end of this section, reviewers should understand the problem, what you are already doing about it, and why you need more capacity.

VISTA Project Summary 200–600 words

What to include

- The VISTA Volunteer's role and the overall goal of the project
- The main capacity-building activities the VISTA will complete (you will detail these in the VAD)
- How the project addresses the need described in your Community Need narrative
- The capacity-building outcomes you expect, such as new systems, partnerships, volunteer programs, or funding, and how they will make your organization more efficient and effective

Tip: Someone unfamiliar with your organization should be able to read this section and explain what the VISTA will do all year. Make sure every major activity here also appears in your VAD, and vice versa.

Sustainability 50–150 words

What to include

- How long you expect the project to run (1, 2, or 3 years)
- Concrete steps that will keep the work going after the VISTA Volunteer leaves, including who will take it over
- The resources, materials, systems, and processes the VISTA will create to support continuity
- The community stakeholders, partners, or residents involved

Tip: Specific steps and examples are stronger than general commitments. "Our Program Director will take over the volunteer database and train two staff members to maintain it" says more than "staff will continue the work."

Recruitment 50–150 words

What to include

- How you will promote your VISTA opening through your own networks, such as newsletters, social media, partner organizations, local colleges, and job boards
- Who on your team will take part in interviews

Tip: Name the specific channels and partners you will use.

VISTA Volunteer Support 100–300 words

What to include

- Who will serve as Site Supervisor, and their role in the organization
- How you will orient the VISTA Volunteer and help them adjust to your organization (your OSOT plan)
- How often you will check in, and in what format
- The workspace and equipment you will provide (desk, computer, phone, email, internet)
- Your experience with AmeriCorps VISTA, other national service programs, interns, or volunteers. If you have not hosted a VISTA before, describe your experience supervising interns or volunteers.

Tip: Supervising a VISTA Volunteer takes an average of 15 hours per month, and more during the first few weeks.

Professional Development 100–200 words

What to include

- The specific educational and professional development opportunities you will offer, such as conferences, webinars, skills training (for example, Excel or grant writing), attending or presenting at board meetings, and shadowing leadership
- How you will make the year a meaningful experience for your VISTA Volunteer

Tip: Professional development is a high priority for the VHA VISTA Program. Give specific examples rather than general intentions.

Section 3: Site Support Payment

Describe how you will secure the $6,500 SSP by August 2027. If the funds are already secured, say where they will come from, such as an approved budget line. If not, describe a specific plan. Examples include:

- A pending or planned grant or funding request (name the funder if you can)
- Reallocating an existing budget line
- Board or individual giving
- A partner organization sharing the cost
- **Requesting an SSP scholarship.** If your annual operating budget is under $1 million, you may request one of the four funded SSP scholarships in Section 3. Make sure the annual organizational budget you list in Section 1A is accurate. Even if you request a scholarship, describe how you would cover the full SSP if one is not awarded to your organization.

Section 4: VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)

The VAD is your VISTA Volunteer's work plan for the year and the foundation of their experience. It:

- Serves as the position description used to recruit VISTA Volunteers
- Turns your project goals into a realistic set of activities for the year

- Gives the VISTA a tool for tracking progress throughout the term
- Serves as a reference point if questions arise about the VISTA's responsibilities

If you are selected, you will finalize the VAD with VHA in January–February 2027, and it can be updated during the year with approval from VHA and AmeriCorps. Even so, the VAD you submit is reviewed alongside your Project Summary, so make it complete and specific.

VISTA title. Choose a title that summarizes your project's focus, such as Data Analyst VISTA, Communications Strategy VISTA, Housing Specialist VISTA, or Standards of Care VISTA. You can change it before recruitment opens.

The four objectives. VHA sets four objectives that are the same for every Host Site, which keeps the program cohesive across a wide range of projects. Place each activity under the objective it best supports:

1. Develop or identify resources that increase capacity and enhance organizational sustainability, efficiency, and effectiveness.
2. Enhance community and partner engagement to expand affordable housing and/or homelessness services efforts.
3. Improve the quality of data collection and use in decision-making.
4. Promote best practices in affordable housing development and/or homelessness services.

Writing strong activities. Activities describe what the VISTA Volunteer will create, implement, or evaluate to reach your project's goal. Strong activities:

- Name a specific action and the deliverable or outcome it produces
- Can realistically be completed within 12 months
- Are clear enough that someone unfamiliar with the project understands what is expected
- Are capacity building only, with no direct service
- Connect back to your Community Need and Project Summary

Avoid vague statements such as "will assist with…," and don't list an outcome without the way the VISTA will reach it:

Instead of…	Try…
Build partnerships.	Build partnerships by establishing a Housing Committee of local Richmond housing authorities that meets quarterly to share best practices.
Help with volunteers.	Develop a volunteer policy and procedure handbook, and use it to train new volunteers.
Assist with outreach.	Create an outreach campaign that increases community awareness of the organization's housing education forums.
Update the database.	Clean and update the resident services database so all contact information is current, and write a guide for maintaining it.

Aim for at least two activities under each objective. There is no maximum, and the balance may vary with your project's focus. See the example VAD in the Appendix.

Capacity-Building Work Areas

After the VAD, check each work area your project will address: Program Development/Start-up, Compliance Training, Scale/Reach, Leveraged Resources, or Recruitment and Marketing. Choose the areas that match the activities in your VAD. If none fits, select Other and describe your capacity-building goal.

Acknowledgment and Certification

Read each statement, mark that you acknowledge it, and sign and date the application. The statements summarize requirements described in this document: the capacity-building focus, background checks, full-time service, workspace, participation in recruitment, VHA membership, restrictions on VISTA activities, the SSP, and VISTA Volunteer benefits. If anything is unclear, contact the VHA VISTA Program Manager before signing.

Before You Submit: Checklist

- ☐ Every narrative is within its word range
- ☐ Community Need includes current, cited data and describes your current efforts
- ☐ The Project Summary and VAD describe the same project, and every VAD activity is capacity building
- ☐ Each VAD objective has at least two specific activities
- ☐ The Site Supervisor is named, and your supervision, orientation, and workspace plans are described
- ☐ Your recruitment and professional development plans include specific examples
- ☐ Your sustainability plan includes concrete steps
- ☐ Your SSP funding source or plan is identified
- ☐ Work areas are checked, acknowledgments are marked, and the application is signed and dated
- ☐ The application is saved as Word or PDF and emailed to hmoore@vahousingalliance.org by December 8, 2026

> **Questions?**
>
> For questions about these instructions or the application, contact Hannah Moore, VHA VISTA Program Manager, at hmoore@vahousingalliance.org or 910.258.2420.

Appendix: Example VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)

This example from VHA's own VISTA project shows the level of detail reviewers look for. Your VAD will follow the same four objectives.

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: 2027–2028
Site Name: Virginia Housing Alliance
Focus Area: Economic Opportunity (primary)

VISTA Assignment Objectives and 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 Volunteer will identify new avenues of funding to expand VHA's educational work of providing housing training to other public sectors, and cultivate new community partnerships to help lead this statewide training. The VISTA Volunteer will also develop a digital outreach strategy that increases awareness of the HoUSed campaign, generates donors for VHA's conferences, and expands VHA's reach to increase membership.

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

VISTA Volunteer Activities:

1. Identify new grant opportunities that will increase funding for VHA-sponsored housing training forums and webinars.
    a. Draft letters of inquiry, proposals, and reports.
    b. Edit, proofread, and help write non-grant narratives, reports, and success stories.
2. Prepare briefing materials, funder updates, and other program updates to support donor cultivation and stewardship.
3. Create marketing materials for VHA's conferences with a target of increasing and diversifying donors and stakeholders.
4. Develop a member survey that identifies training needs to ensure VHA's educational offerings are comprehensive.
    a. Present findings to VHA's board committee.
    b. Identify community stakeholders to help fill service gaps and provide training based on survey feedback.

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

VISTA Volunteer Activities:

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

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

VISTA Volunteer Activities:

1. Create and implement a database training program for VHA's grant writing team to centralize award information and funder deliverables.
2. Centralize data from membership feedback forms so it can inform educational curricula for the upcoming year.
3. Collect and compile data on affordable housing in Virginia.
    a. Draft reports and presentations that inform VHA's yearly advocacy agenda.
4. Develop forum feedback forms to gauge the impact of housing trainings.

Objective 4: Promote best practices in affordable housing development and/or homelessness services.

VISTA Volunteer Activities:

1. Establish a recurring partnership call with affordable housing agencies in Virginia 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 affordable housing.