

Community Organization AmeriCorps*VISTA
On-Site Orientation & Training Plan
for

WEEK ONE

Day 1: Welcome to the Community Organization; Getting Started

Morning

- Welcome new VISTA
- Introduce new VISTA to the President/CEO: President/CEO briefly discusses history and purpose of the organization, the project, and how the member fits in.
- Introduce new VISTA to co-workers during tour of facility.
- Show new VISTA work area
- Show location of rest rooms, lunch and break rooms/space

- VISTA attends regular staff meeting. Take time at staff meeting to remind everyone what the VISTA's role will be. Help VISTA feel welcome and part of the team.

Lunch: Have lunch with VISTA to make him or her feel at home.

Afternoon

- Discuss basic terms of work, policies, procedures:
 - Explain hours of work and overtime policies, holidays and VISTA leave days
 - Explain organization rules about absenteeism, tardiness and process for reporting absence or illness
 - Discuss timesheets, leave usage
 - Explain VISTA compensation process
 - Explain break policy and lunch hour (tell about restaurants in area)
 - Explain use of telephone, mail services, copier (security code), fax machine
 - Provide phone list(s)
 - Explain standards of conduct , including rules of dress, personal grooming, smoking policy, housekeeping rules, etc.
 - Explain parking practices
 - Explain safety procedures
 - Explain how to order supplies
 - Provide (or arrange for) office keys to building
- Colleague shows the new VISTA how to use essential equipment (telephone, computer, fax machine, copier).
- If VISTA has moved from another part of the country, spend time asking about how the transition is going and how you might help: discuss housing situation, local shopping and services, banks, medical facilities, etc.
 - If there is time at the end of the day, give VISTA time to take care of some of these needs – everything related to housing, bank account, phone service, post office, etc.

**Day 2: AM: Taking Care of Basic Needs;
PM: Organizational Purpose and Mission and the VISTA Project**

Morning

- Allow the VISTA to take the morning to take care of any additional basic needs – e.g., related to housing, bank account, phone service, post office, etc. If a staff member is available to help the VISTA, have someone accompany VISTA to help him/her out.

Lunch with group of office colleagues.

Afternoon

- Discuss in more detail the mission, background, and purpose of the sponsoring organization
 - Explain history and purpose of the Organization
 - Review organization mission, goals and objectives
 - Review organization structure
 - Provide copy of organization chart and review staff duties
 - Explain departmental and divisional functions, goals, teams and team structure, major projects
- Purpose of the VISTA project
 - Explain the purpose of the VISTA project and role of the VISTAs
 - Explain goals and objectives of project
 - Review past work of project if in year 2 or 3
- Give the VISTA time to read any materials presented to him/her.
- At the end of the day, do a ½ hour check in/Q&A to answer any questions the VISTA may have come up with about the organization or project. Tell VISTA that tomorrow you will be going over his/her workplan in more detail.

Day 3: The Member Assignment, Supervisory Relationship, and Community Investigation.

Morning

- Clarification of individual work plan(s), how goals will be achieved, and how the VISTA member's progress in achieving work plan objectives will be assessed
 - Review the individual workplan/job description, explain specific responsibilities
 - **Important: Make it clear what the outcomes of the project are: what permanent infrastructure will the VISTA help create and how will that help individuals or communities move out of poverty.**
 - Explain performance reviews (date for first review, frequency thereafter)
 - Provide copy of performance standards
 - Discuss performance expectations and/or standards and reporting requirements
 - Discuss specific performance objectives which will be reviewed during the initial period.
- Supervisory and support structure; communications; reporting; accountability
 - Discuss the working relationship between VISTA and direct supervisor, mutual expectations, communications style, work style, support needs, etc.
 - Discuss and clarify communication procedures and practices
 - Review staff meeting and team meeting schedules
 - Present VISTA copy of Employee Manual and have each VISTA sign a form to acknowledge receipt of the handbook and intention to become familiar with its contents
 - Explain steps in discipline procedure (verbal warning, written warning, etc.) and specify actions that would

result in disciplinary action.

- End on a positive affirming note about how excited you are to have the VISTA working on this project.
- Have the VISTA interview other staff about work styles, communications, etc.

Afternoon

- **Independent Community Investigation:** VISTA spends afternoon exploring community and making a mental inventory of assets, needs and cultural practices. Brief the member before he/she heads out into the community about where to go, what to look for, and how to ensure his or her safety. Explain that he/she will be reviewing his or her observations with an expert on the community the following morning.

Day 4: Deepening the Understanding the Community and the Project.

Morning

- VISTA spends the morning with someone who is very knowledgeable about the community and discusses his or her observations from the previous day.
 - This community “expert” provides a background on Gotham City (including a more guided tour than his/her previous day’s meanderings).
 - The community “expert” explains the nature of the low-income population served by the VISTA project
 - The community “expert” introduces VISTA to community leaders, especially those involved in the VISTA project
 - Discuss cultural norms, do’s and don’ts, social outlets to enjoy and those to stay away from, etc.

Afternoon

- Have VISTA spend the afternoon with one or more partner organizations and/or other VISTAs and AmeriCorps State/National members involved in this project or related projects.
 - Gather as much information as possible to help VISTA understand the community and the project.

Day 5: Reflection; Team Building; Celebration of the First Week.

Morning

- Discuss impressions and findings from Day 4 with supervisor. Discuss impressions these have for the project and the VISTA’s workplan.
- Discuss potential resources that can be applied to help achieve project goals:
 - Review use of volunteers on the VISTA project
 - Meet with recruitment representatives from Volunteer Center, RSVP
 - Review barriers and successes to volunteer use of resources discussed.
 - How VISTA can best help volunteers and others involved in the project
 - Discuss support/recognition; helping volunteers to feel valued; ways to recognize

Afternoon:

- Team Building activity with staff, other VISTAs, project collaborators, other AmeriCorps Members, etc.

Evening:

- Potluck dinner with office staff, other VISTAs, AmeriCorps members, Senior Corps members and VISTA alumni.

Celebration of the first week of the VISTA's assignment!

WEEK TWO

Day 1: Skill Development: Shadowing Staff of sponsor organization

Morning and Afternoon

- VISTA accompanies staff member for the whole day out of the office – conducting community interviews, recruiting volunteer participation in project, managing volunteers on project etc.

Day 2: Skill Development: Shadowing Staff of another organization involved in similar work.

Morning and Afternoon

- VISTA accompanies staff member of another organization involved in similar or complementary efforts for the whole day – conducting community interviews, recruiting volunteer participation in project, managing volunteers on project etc.

Day 3: Reflection and Collaboration/Informational Interviews

Morning

- VISTA meets with supervisor to discuss previous days shadow activities and to reflect on community interviews, recruiting volunteer participation in project, managing volunteers on project etc.
- Discussion of additional training needs VISTA needs to carry out assignment.
- VISTA begins contacting community/organizational leaders with whom he/she will be collaborating on the project to set up informational interviews, beginning this afternoon.

Afternoon

- Informational/collaboration interview 1: Discussion with Father O'Brien from the Ecumenical Outreach Program.

Day 4: Informational/Collaboration Interviews (Continued)

Morning

- Informational/collaboration interview 2: Discussion with Tanika Roberts from the Community Employment Training and Services Agency.
- Informational/collaboration interview 3: Discussion with Sam Parker from the Gotham City East End Community Center.

Afternoon

- Discussion with supervisor and other organization staff about conclusions from informational/collaboration interviews. What implications can be drawn related to the project? What recommendations and cautions do the supervisor and other staff have about those conclusions?
- VISTA spends the rest of the day drafting a one-month, detailed workplan – with clear and detailed activities defined.
- Draft month-long plan reviewed with the supervisor at the end of the day.

Day 5: Skill Development: Computer Skills

Morning and Afternoon

VISTA spends day with local Power Up technician learning and/or refining computer skills he/she will need (e.g., Microsoft Word, Excel, Publisher, Access) for producing flyers, pamphlets and posters; writing grant proposals; building and/or using contact databases; etc.

WEEK THREE

VISTA begins independent implementation of project with frequent check-in sessions with supervisor and other key organization staff to see how the work is going. Supervisor makes it clear to the VISTA that this third week is still a period of learning, practice, testing, and adapting. He or she should not worry about making mistakes, asking lots of questions, and experimenting.

Additional skill training is set up for the VISTA as needed: For example, VISTA could participate in a public speaking class offered by the community continuing education program; learn from an experienced staff member the key components of a quality grant proposal; or spend an afternoon with someone from the credit union to learn about the management of low-income loan programs, interest rates and starting a small business.