



The Montana Campus Compact – AmeriCorps VISTA Project On-Site Orientation Training (OSOT)

PROJECT TITLE:
COMMUNITY:
SUPERVISOR:
VISTA Member:

The following is an orientation plan for your first three weeks at your site. The purpose of the orientation is to establish an effective working relationship between you and your supervisor, the site's staff, and community. It will also help you dive deeper into your new community and to learn more about your role as a VISTA.

By the end of OSOT, the VISTA should gain the following:

1. An understanding of common expectations and agreements for working relationship between VISTA and supervisor;
2. An understanding of the culture and mission of the sponsoring organization;
3. Knowledge of the relationship between the VISTA project and community needs;
4. An understanding of your campus partner and their role in the VISTA project;
5. An understanding of the VISTA Assignment Description (VAD) with your supervisor;
6. An understanding of the skills and knowledge needed to implement the VAD.

Week 1 – Getting to know your organization/community

We are excited to have you join us this year. The next two weeks will test your ability to digest a lot of information but we know you are up for the challenge!

Introductions with staff

- a) Practice giving your elevator pitch to staff who are unfamiliar with VISTA. Get to know other's roles in the organization and how they overlap with your duties.
- b) Important! Establish a weekly meeting time with your site supervisor.

Task: Create an email introducing yourself as the new VISTA member to the greater community.

Learn About Your Organization

This is an opportunity to really dig into the history, mission and vision of your organization. Ask lots of questions.

- a) What services does it provide, who do you serve, and what role does it play in the community?
- b) Learn the history of VISTA with your organization. Why did your host site choose VISTA to execute the project? How does the mission of VISTA fit with the host site's mission?

Become familiar with your organization's Policies and Procedures

Ask: What are the office dynamics and what is your place in the chain of command?
What training will you need with office equipment?

1. Take a tour of your campus or organization.
2. Set up your office basics...
 - a) Computer, phone (login and voicemail), email address and phone number.
 - b) Learn how to operate your organization's internal servers, fax, and copy machines.
 - c) Create an email signature with "Montana Campus Compact VISTA member serving with [your host site]"
3. Review applicable employee manuals and ask questions about work place expectations.

Tip: Take cues and notes from your host site to learn work culture, dress code, professional expectations and communication styles.

Important things to know about your work space.

- Where do you park? What is the dress code? Where are office supplies located? Keys to the building? What are the hours of your site? Gas mileage reimbursement for travel? Media and communications policy, etc?

Why you, Why now, Why this project?

Consider the factors that brought you to Montana to serve.

- a. What is the overall strategy of the project from your supervisor's point of view?
- b. What does your organization hope for you to accomplish?
- c. Why is this project important to the host organization?
- d. What work has already been done on this project?

Task: Meet with 3 community members who will have a stake in your service. Additionally, set a time to meet with your campus partner.

Task: Establish mutual goals between you and your supervisor.

Research

1. Find and **ASK** history/information of your community (this is important for community entry!)
 - a. When was the community founded? Who are the members of the community?
 - b. What are the local norms or expectations of someone in the community?
 - c. Identify % of population living in poverty in your county/community (US census)?
 - d. What are the area demographics (US census)?
 - e. How do people access volunteer opportunities?
 - f. Is there a volunteer center, chamber of commerce or community resource guide?
2. What is the history of the poverty problem your project hope to ameliorate?
 - Think back to the information you gained from your VISTA Orientation. Consider the problems from a holistic understanding of poverty and its causes.
3. What are some local agencies/organizations who run antipoverty programs in your area?

Tip: Don't reinvent the wheel! Look for solutions and relationships in the community that could benefit your project.

Task: Create a list of agencies/organizations doing similar work to your project/host site (add to 'Task List' on page 5)

As you research your community (this is ongoing throughout service) reflect on the following:

- How long have organizations/communities been working to address this issue?
- What types of programs have been created to respond to the need?
- What best practices currently exist that could be incorporated into your project?

Workshop your VISTA Assignment Description (VAD) - Part 1

This is the most important document for informing your responsibilities throughout your service. The activities and priorities can sometimes be vague. Don't shy away from this. Use it as an opportunity to assert your own creativity and initiative into producing outcomes for your organization!

With supervisor - Review VAD project goal, objectives and activities that support that goal (member binder).

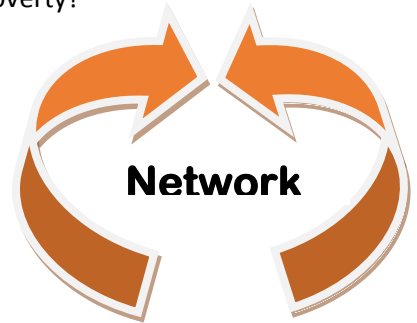
Ask: What are the key action terms in the VAD? What activities can you break into step-by-step actions?

With supervisor - Review project Performance Measures, targets and data collection methods (member binder)

Ask: Whom are you serving? How will your capacity building efforts help alleviate poverty?

Week 1 Challenge Round

1. Make a friend (in or out of service)
2. Get a library card and check out one book on the history of your area
3. Attend a free community event – rodeo, fair, powwow, festivals, etc.



Week 1 Key Milestones

By the end of Week 1 you should have a firm understanding of the following:

- a) The VAD as an actionable roadmap for your year and why it’s important to your organization;
- b) Broad knowledge of community make-up, history and local public service organizations;
- c) Your organization’s work culture, expectations, personnel, and communications styles.

*If you have not met these milestones please make time with your supervisor to do so.

Week 2 – Getting to know your project/potential partners and networking

Workshop your VISTA Assignment Description (VAD) - Part 2

With supervisor - Review *specific* duties and responsibilities associated with your VAD goal, objectives and activities

Ask: What training will I need to complete this VAD?

Ask: What resources are available to me to complete this VAD?

Explore the Greater Community

1. Identify community groups, clubs, and media outlets – develop a list of relevant contacts.
 - Ex: The Rotary Club, The Kiwanis Club, Boys & Girls Clubs, After School Alliances, Church Organizations, Local Schools, Teacher Associations, Professional organizations
2. Locate the media resources in your community – develop a media contact list:
 - Local newspapers, television and radio stations

Task: Identify 2 other ways information is shared in your community.

3. Identify other National Service members in your community – create an area-specific contact list you may reference (MTCC office is a great resource for contact information).

Task: Schedule at least **two** meetings to introduce yourself to these members and talk about ways to collaborate.

Tip: Fellow national service members can be great partners and help you achieve your project goals. Not to mention be good friends and volunteers!

Here is a list of National service organizations in Montana (and check out this website for all national services programming in Montana: <http://serve.mt.gov/> – Look for connections.

| AmeriCorps VISTA | AmeriCorps State/National | Senior Corps |
|--|---|--|
| Montana Campus Compact, Prevention Resource Center, Rural Dynamics, Billings Metro VISTA Project | Montana Campus Compact, Montana Conservation Corps, State Parks, FoodCorps, Big Sky Watershed Corps, Justice for Montanans, Energy Corps, Jesuit Volunteer Corps and Equal Justice Works, No Kid Hungry | RSVP, Foster Grandparents and Senior Companion Program |

Goal Setting for Sustainability

Your year term of service will fly by! A key goal of VISTA service is for the systems and processes you create (and the partnerships you form) are sustainable – meaning they are built in a way that allows them to be handed off to the organization when you are gone.

With your supervisor - plan and discuss how your service activities will be sustainable in the long term.

Task: Establish a 6-month goals worksheet for the project.

Week 2 Challenge Round

1. Explore the nearest river to you. (If no river, explore the nearest hill or mountain).
2. Get to know your supervisor! Talk about your passions, skills, inspirations and interests as they relate to life and service. **Ask:** How do they like to supervise and what are their expectations of you?
3. Find the cheapest lunch spot around.

Week 2 Key Milestones

By the end of this week you should have a firm understanding of the following.

- a) VISTA Assignment Description goal, objectives, and activities. Identify additional resources and training needed to execute activities – (add to 'OSOT Task List' on page 5);
- b) Identify relevant community resources and members who can support your project;
- c) Establish contact with national service members;
- d) Understand how your year of service will lead to long-term sustainable change.

*If you have not met these milestones please make time with your supervisor to do so.

Week 3 – The Journey Begins!

Develop Your Work plan and Take Action

Meet with supervisor to create a 1 month work plan that fulfills one or more objectives in your VAD
Your work plan goals should be S.M.A.R.T. in relation to the poverty problem you are addressing and your available resources.

S – Sustainable
M – Measurable
A – Achievable
R – Realistic
T – Time Bound

Ex SMART Goal:

*To co-author the Washington
Foundation grant by January 15th, 2016*

Task: Continue to conduct informational interviews/meetings with relevant community members, college departments and organizations.

Resource Links

[VISTA Campus](#) - utilize no-cost webinars, courses, alum networks, stories and additional training.

Task: Sign up for 1 free class/webinar.

[Member Handbook](#) - Comprehensive information regarding VISTA service.

[Member Folder](#) - Helpful contacts and info regarding service with MTCC.

Check in with Montana Campus Compact for additional resources. The VISTA Leader will contact you to review this training sometime during the first month of your service.



OSOT Task List

Community organization/stakeholder meetings

| Agency/Organization | Nature of meeting | By when | Who with? | Completed? |
|----------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| <i>Day care/preschools</i> | <i>Inventory</i> | <i>August 25</i> | <i>Program director</i> | |
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Training needs

| Performance Milestone | Type of training | By when | Delivery |
|------------------------|--|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>Indicators work</i> | <i>Maintenance and data collection</i> | <i>August 15th</i> | <i>Vista Alumni, Supervisor</i> |
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