

CREATING AN EFFECTIVE VISTA ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTION

What is a VISTA Assignment Description (VAD)?

The VAD details the activities a VISTA member will perform during a service year. It is both a position description and work plan.

The VAD takes the milestones you've identified in your VISTA application and translates them into a realistic set of activities. Supervisors can use the VAD to frame important conversations with their VISTA. It also indicates projects priorities, organizational and community challenges, and the purpose of the project

VADS ARE USED TO:

1. Recruit potential applicants
2. Enable members to understand responsibilities
3. Guide VISTAs in achieving project milestones
4. Allow supervisors & VISTA to monitor performance and assess whether the project is on track

TIPS FOR PREPARING A VAD

1. The VAD should identify key capacity building tasks and activities the VISTA can realistically accomplish in one year.
2. Include enough detail to guide the VISTA while allowing for flexibility in carrying out day-to-day tasks and activities.
3. Member activities should be written using active verbs such as create, develop, engage, etc.
4. Avoid words that indicate direct service.
5. VAD should include the poverty mission of the project and clearly show capacity building activities.

ELEMENTS OF THE VAD

Title: Each VAD requires a distinct position title

Goal: The goal statement should describe the overall goal in terms of organizational capacity and community impact. It should focus on how the VISTA will work to break the cycle of poverty. Keep it concise, no more than 3-4 sentences. 750 characters.

Example Goal Statement:

The overall goal of this VISTA project is to raise awareness of community resources for low-income Montana State University (MSU) students, and increase student volunteerism by strengthening relationships and collaboration between MSU's Office of Student Engagement and resource centers and nonprofits. This will break the cycle of poverty by helping students access resources allowing them to remain enrolled. It will also help increase volunteer capacity for a number of anti-poverty organizations. This VISTA member will accomplish these goals by building stronger relationships with community organizations, especially with programs of the Human Resource Development Council. They will also coordinate educational and informational workshops.

Objectives: Objectives you identify must articulate what the VISTA will achieve during their assignment. Each VAD should include more than one objective and include completion dates. Objectives should form a bridge between your goal statement and the VISTA's activities.

- Describe the outcome of a set of activities in a sentence or two
- Check that they align with the goal statement
- Include goal numbers or data, if possible
- Ensure objectives increase capacity and are **not direct service**

Example Objective Statement:

Reinstate Montana State University (MSU) Connections workshops to increase college student awareness of community nonprofits and volunteer opportunities.

ELEMENTS OF THE VAD CON'T

Activities: This section identifies more specifically what the VISTA will do to achieve the objectives. To begin, start with the Performance Measures selected in the VISTA project proposal application and transfer them into appropriate activities.

Example Member Activities:

- 1.The VISTA will connect with local nonprofits and invite them to participate in MSU Connections workshops.
- 2.The VISTA will plan and host will plan and host MSU Connections workshops for nonprofit staff two times per semester.

Questions about writing a VAD? Contact Callye Foster, MTCC Director of Programs at Foster@mtcompact.org or 406-243-2379