



## **2012 – 2013 AmeriCorps VISTA Project Request for Concept Papers and Project Plans**

**Deadline: Monday, January 30, 2012 at 9:00 AM**

### OVERVIEW

Greater Homewood Community Corporation (GHCC) is soliciting applications from Baltimore City non-profit agencies, service agencies, and community organizations to fill 15 AmeriCorps Volunteer in Service to America (VISTA) project slots for service placements beginning in July 2012 and ending in July 2013. Each VISTA placement is one year in duration.

Established in 1969 to help neighborhoods become safer, better places to live, GHCC's mission is to build and strengthen vibrant urban communities in north central Baltimore. For more than three decades, GHCC has secured the resources of VISTA members to build sustainable change and fight poverty in our neighborhoods.

To be considered for a VISTA project placement, potential service sites must demonstrate a significant need for an AmeriCorps VISTA project and a well-conceived VISTA project plan. Potential service sites should also prioritize the following:

- Building and strengthening vibrant urban communities in Baltimore City
- A specific anti-poverty focus in their work, addressing the needs of a low-income communities
- A commitment to volunteerism and sustainability-oriented thinking as a strategy for addressing local issues

### WORKING WITH AMERICORPS VISTAs

VISTA is a federally-funded program specifically focused on eradicating poverty through engaging individuals in full-time community service. VISTAs do not provide direct service to communities, but work to create sustainable change in their area of focus. VISTAs provide communities with the necessary tools and training to help themselves for the long term.

GHCC supports the following VISTA values:

- **Anti-Poverty Focus:** As previously stated, the mission of VISTA is to eradicate poverty. As such, every VISTA project must be conceived with the perspective of helping individuals and communities out of poverty
- **Community Empowerment:** Service sites have an affirmative responsibility to engage members of the low-income community in the planning, development, implementation and evaluation of their project
- **Sustainable Solutions:** All VISTA projects are to be designed with the specific goal of phasing out VISTA involvement, while strengthening the ability of the project to function and succeed without them

For 2012, VISTA has established some specific areas of focus. While all anti-poverty projects are considered for placement, priority is given to those projects whose focus aligns with the following:

- **Veteran and Military Families**, including increasing economic, educational and health opportunities for these families
- **Economic Opportunity**, including improving financial stability, access to affordable housing and employment opportunities
- **Healthy Futures**, including access to health care services, obesity prevention and aging in place
- **Environmental Stewardship**, including a reduction in the consumption of fossil fuels and improving at-risk ecosystems
- **Education**, including increasing graduation rates and improving grade-level performance

## PROJECT DETAILS AND GUIDELINES

Applications to this Request for Concept Papers and Project Plans should be focused on the creation and execution of a specific, measurable, goal-driven project. VISTA members are expected to engage their whole focus on their specific project, and may not be assigned any general administrative or maintenance tasks by their service site.

VISTA members are provided an assignment description to address a specific issue in their area of focus, sufficient to provide about 40 service hours per week for one full year. VISTA members are expected to be available to their service site at all times and as needed.

As the sponsor of these VISTA positions, GHCC is primarily responsible for the recruitment, initial Onsite Training (which takes place for 1-2 weeks at the start of the placement), continuing professional development, support for VISTA concerns (such as housing, food stamps, etc.) and overall reporting for each VISTA project.

Service sites will be responsible for overall project support and implementation, supervising their VISTA and meeting individual project reporting deadlines as set by GHCC.

Many VISTA project slots awarded through the GHCC grant are considered “cost share” slots by the CNCS state office, meaning that service sites are responsible for covering a portion of the cost of the VISTA’s living allowance. GHCC adds to this a small administrative fee, which includes a VISTA travel stipend. For the 2012-2013 Grant, GHCC projects that the **total cost of a VISTA Service Site Placement will be approximately \$10,000**. Service Sites will be responsible for remitting the full cost of their placement to GHCC.

### GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE APPLICATION

To ensure that each response to this Request for Concept Papers and Project Plans receives the appropriate consideration, all responses are to be submitted **by January 27, 2012 BEFORE 9:00 AM**. Proposals should be submitted via email, mail or in person, to the below address:

Greater Homewood Community Corporation  
3503 N. Charles Street  
Baltimore, MD 21218  
ATTN: Tyson W. Smith ([tsmith@greaterhomewood.org](mailto:tsmith@greaterhomewood.org))

Applicants are requested to submit the following:

- VISTA Project Concept Paper
- Initial VISTA Project Plan

An *informal pre-proposal workshop* will be held on **Tuesday, January 10** at 5:30 PM at the above address for applicants interested in obtaining more information about being a service site. Please RSVP to Lesa Sexton (410-261-3504 or [lsexton@greaterhomewood.org](mailto:lsexton@greaterhomewood.org)) to reserve a space at the workshop.

### SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS FOR CONCEPT PAPER

A successful concept paper should address the following:

- Brief Description of the VISTA Project – Provide a basic statement of the goal of the project and its expected outcomes.
- Timeline for the Project – VISTA projects are generally expected to be completed in one to three years. Please include a basic timeline for the proposed project including an end date.
- Anti-Poverty Focus – Provide, in measurable terms, a statement of how the proposed project will help eradicate poverty.

- Sustainability – Describe the measures in place to ensure that, at the end of a VISTA member’s involvement, the project will continue.
- Anticipated Assessment Measures – Describe how the project will be evaluated in a measurable and quantifiable context.
- Site Support for the Project – Describe the resources that the project will receive from placement at your service site, including direct agency support, community support, available administrative or supervisory support, etc.
- For Sites with a VISTA Currently Placed through GHCC, please also include:
  - Your successes in the 2011-2012 Project
  - How you plan to alter the project for the 2012-2013 service year
  - What you would like to alter about your relationship with GHCC or VISTA in the coming year

### SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS FOR INITIAL VISTA PROJECT PLAN

The **Community Need Statement** should include relevant statistical data and other pertinent information to justify the need for the proposed VISTA project at the Service Site.

The **Goal Statement** should clearly and concisely state what the VISTA project is intended to accomplish.

A minimum of three **Performance Measures** should detail a specific breakdown of how the project will be accomplished. This is similar to a work plan and should include the following for each measure:

- Milestone – Each performance measure is highlighted by a milestone, or individual accomplishment which will, when completed, indicate significant progress towards the overall goal of the project.
- Planned Period of Accomplishment – Over the projected life of the VISTA project, when will this specific Performance Measure take place?
- Plan for Measuring Success – Include a description of how the project will specifically track progress on this Performance Measure, including the means by which the data will be collected and how an overall strategy for evaluating success.

Please contact Tyson Smith, Director of Partnerships & Business Services and AmeriCorps VISTA Supervisor (410-261-3509 or [tsmith@greaterhomewood.org](mailto:tsmith@greaterhomewood.org)) or Lesa Sexton, VISTA Leader (410-261-3504 or [lsexton@greaterhomewood.org](mailto:lsexton@greaterhomewood.org)) with questions regarding the development of a VISTA project or specific questions regarding this Request for Concept Papers and Project Plans.